

12. Dec

A
COURSE
OF
LECTURES
ON THE
HOLY FESTIVALS;
WITH
PRACTICAL REMARKS ON EACH,
AND
EXHORTATIONS TO A MORE DEVOUT AND
SOLEMN OBSERVANCE OF THEM.

By SAMUEL GLASSE, D.D. F.R.S.

RECTOR OF WANSTEAD, ESSEX,
AND CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

We are not to deny a place in our remembrance and affection to those Servants of the LORD, whose high commission and singular endowments, whose constant services and faithful labours, have established for them an eminent distinction in the records of the Church.
Archdeacon POTT on the Festivals.

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LECTURES
ON THE
HOLY FESTIVALS;



BY SAMUEL CLAY, D.D.
AND CHURCH IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY

These lectures were delivered at the Royal Academy of Music, in the Chapel of St. George, during the Festival of the Holy Trinity, 1841.

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NO. 22, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.
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H. GARNER, BRADFORD.

The object is to bring forward, in a
new point of view, that "Cloud of
Witnesses."

HIS GRACE

JOHN,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

&c. &c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

It will not be matter of surprise,
that Your Grace's exalted station in
the Church of England, and also the
high respectability of Your personal
character, should have excited in my
mind a wish, that the following work
might be honoured with Your Grace's
acceptance, and receive the benefit of
such desirable patronage.

Its object is to bring forward, in a new point of view, that "Cloud of Witnesses," who, in the earliest ages of Christianity, stood forth in the defence of a pure, but persecuted, Religion; and who gave the best evidence of their full conviction of its truth, by a readiness to seal their testimony with their blood.

If this attempt to exhibit the examples of "men of like passions with ourselves," so wonderfully supported under their sufferings in the cause of God and Religion, should, in Your Grace's opinion, be calculated to convert the unbeliever, to silence the gainsayer, or to animate the indifferent, Your Grace will want no farther inducement to honour it with
Your

DEDICATION.

v

Your protection; You will readily
condescend to give it currency and
importance, by suffering it to go forth
into the world with advantage, under
the sanction of Your Grace's name.

I have the honour to be,

With the greatest respect,

My LORD,

Your GRACE's most obliged

and most obedient

humble Servant,

SAMUEL GLASSE.

DEPOSITION.

Your protection; You will readily
condescend to give it currency and
importance, by inserting it to go forth
into the world with advantage, under
the sanction of Your Grace's name.

I have the honour to be

With the greatest respect,

My Lord,

Your Grace's most obliged

and most obedient

humble servant,

SAMUEL CLASSE.

X

PREFACE.

AS nothing is more fatal to our progress in any undertaking, than a persuasion that success is unattainable, since no one will long persist in the pursuit of an object which he thinks can never be accomplished, it seems highly conducive to the interests of Religion to shew, that its virtues are within our reach in this life, and that the glory prepared for us in a better is attainable. When we produce examples of persons of like passions with their fellow-mortals, walking in confidence and without dismay in the thorny path of sufferings,

sufferings, and steadily pursuing the way to celestial happiness, we speak more forcibly to our hearers, than if we urged them with the most eloquent abstract arguments. The *practicability* of what we recommend to them is evident, and we can, with confidence, bid them "Go, and do likewise."

This good effect, it is to be hoped, may arise from the following pages. They are intended to lay before the reader, in a very comprehensive view, the lives, the characters, the writings, and the sufferings of some of the most eminent servants of God, whose praise is in the gospel, and whose names, we doubt not, are in the book of life; who have long since been called to the enjoyment of that happiness, which their faith foresaw, and to which their hopes aspired; who, having fought a good fight, and finished their course, are inheritors

ritors of that crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the Righteous Judge, shall give them, in the great day of His appearance to judge the world,

The Author is well aware, with what success, and to what great advantage, the pious, learned, and excellent Mr. NELSON has gone before him in a similar path: but the manner in which the subject is here treated being in detail, instead of questions and answers, is so different, that he flatters himself he shall not be suspected of the least intrusion on the plan of that justly admired and celebrated writer: whilst, at the same time, he would be unpardonable, in not acknowledging that the *outline* of his history of these holy persons is chiefly drawn from that well finished picture which Mr. Nelson has given us, and from the same sources of ecclesiastical history,

from

from which his information was derived, The practical reflections the Author hopes will be found to have a sufficient degree of novelty in them to excite attention; and his best purpose will be answered, if they should so address themselves to the heart, as to produce any beneficial effect on the conduct of his readers.

It is true, that this work is somewhat less comprehensive in its object than that of Mr. Nelson's; which takes within its view every festival and every fast appointed to be observed by the Church of England throughout the course of the ecclesiastical year: What are called the Saints Days are the principal subjects of this volume; which our Church is not quite so ungrateful, as totally to have forgotten, though it must be acknowledged and lamented that the observation of these, as well as other holy days,

days, is sadly fallen into disuse. The *daily* service of the Church of England, being, to the great sorrow of serious Christians, almost universally neglected, it is too probable, that these festivals, when they happen on week days, will soon meet with little more attention. Though there are several reasons, why, in many instances, they might, at least in the metropolis, be better observed than ordinary days; there is no doubt that they were originally set apart not merely for the purpose of bodily relaxation, but also to afford the inhabitants of a populous city opportunities of withdrawing themselves occasionally from their professional attention to worldly business. How far the persons, intended to be so benefited, do actually avail themselves of this privilege, our Churches in the vicinity of the public edifices appropriated to the conduct of commercial or state affairs, &c. can best

best declare. It was presumed, however, by the Compiler of the following pages, that whenever any of those Saints Days occurred on a Sunday, he might take advantage of that circumstance, and deliver an occasional evening lecture to his parishioners on the subject of the day. He had reason to believe, that such of them as were delivered, were favourably received. To those who had no opportunity of consulting Mr. Nelson, all that they heard was new, and consequently not altogether uninteresting. To such as *were* acquainted with that pious and useful work, the history of the Saint was presented in a somewhat different light; and the observations drawn from the history were laid before them, at least, with the same desire of producing in their minds edification and conviction, which the Author hopes he may be permitted

mitted to say, actuates his general conduct towards them.

But, alas! the Ministers of our Church have but too much cause to lament, that the very partial attendance of their parishioners on the evening service affords them too few opportunities of addressing them *generally* on religious subjects. We have neither wit, it seems, nor words, nor any mode of attraction, unless we would violate the dignity of our profession, and stoop to the arts of the enthusiast, which can induce those whom we most wish to serve, to dedicate more than a small portion of the Sabbath Day to the service of Him, whose command extends to the due observance of the *whole* of it.

Amidst a thousand acknowledgements, therefore, which the Clergy in general are
always

always ready to make to a very great majority of their parishioners of personal kindness, of liberal support, of unremitted respect, they are often constrained to lament, that, with regard to the observation of the Sabbath, and still more of Festivals and Saints Days, they have no cause to be vain of any progress they have made, or can make, in the improvement of their respective flocks: or rather they have cause to be not a little mortified at the inefficacy of their most strenuous endeavours.

The Author by no means considers *his* personal situation in this respect as singularly unfortunate: on the contrary, he has several very pleasing, very satisfactory exceptions to make in his own particular case. He deplores the *general* prevalence of a custom, which militates against the observance of a most important duty, the attendance

tendance on the evening service on the Lord's Day: and he ventures to take this occasion of observing, that there are very few instances, wherein a man of fortune and of influence could do greater service to Religion, and to those about him, than by a strict enquiry, who among his dependents are attentive to, and who are regardless of, the public duties of Religion; who among them frequent the Church with their families on the Lord's Day, encouraging them to their duty by their good example; and who discountenance the practice of piety, by refusing to attend in the House of God.

The Author has been insensibly drawn aside to make these observations, which he acknowledges more immediately respect the Sabbath, than those days which are dedicated to the commemoration of the first

Martyrs

Martyrs and Advocates for the truth of Christianity. But his opinion is, that a thorough respect for the SUPREME HEAD of the Christian Church would lead to a proportionate regard to the memory of those, who walked in the steps of their Blessed Master: and whose highest ambition it was, to be accounted worthy to suffer reproach, and calumny, and even death itself, for His name's sake; on whose hearts this prayer seems to have been inscribed, in indelible characters; and whom this principle seems to have actuated even in the most trying circumstances of their lives, from the commencement to the close of their labours;

“ Let me die the death of THE RIGH-
TEOUS, and let my last end be like HIS!”

INTRO-

LECTURES

ON THE

OBSERVATION

OF THE

FESTIVALS.

LECTURES

ON THE

OBSERVATION

OF THE

ESTIVALS

SAINT ANDREW

THE APOSTLE.

NOVEMBER 30.

ST. MATT. IV. 18, 19, 20.

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men: And they straightway left their nets and followed Him.

IT has been observed, that the course of our Liturgical Service is not at all directed by the course of the sun in the heavens, or conformed to the order of nature,

in the material and visible world. The present saint, St. Andrew, though celebrated almost at the conclusion of the natural year, you will observe, stands at the head of that illustrious catalogue of holy persons, whose graces and virtues we commemorate; as of persons who stood forward, not only at the *hazard*, but at the certain *loss* of their lives, in defence of the Gospel which they had embraced, and the Religion which they taught. To this pre-eminence the Apostle of this day seems more immediately entitled, as being the first of the disciples who came to Christ; having been prepared by the doctrine and discipline of St. John the Baptist, for the reception and acknowledgement of the Messiah. From which circumstance, I would point out to your notice, of what infinite advantage it is, that persons, setting out on their Christian course, should

at first be induced, by wholesome instructions and good examples, to encourage favourable sentiments of the doctrines which they are about to receive, for the future guide and direction of their lives. Here we find St. *Andrew*, by his early attachment to that distinguished teacher of righteousness, St. John the Baptist, affording the most fair and promising hopes of that eminent piety, which he afterwards manifested. *The preparations of the heart of man, saith Solomon, are of the LORD;* and never is the care of the good husbandman more evidently shewn, than in preparing the soil of the heart for the due reception of that seed, which, being watered and nourished by divine grace, may bring forth fruit unto life eternal. It was no inconsiderable advantage, which St. Andrew enjoyed, when being attendant on the fore-runner of our Saviour, he heard him

openly avow Him, as He passed by, saying, *Behold the LAMB OF GOD, that taketh away the sin of the world!* He had before heard him declare, that the approach of the Messiah was near at hand; he had heard him, doubtless, describe the dignity of His nature and character; and had listened to him, whilst he dwelt on the importance of the errand upon which He was about to make His appearance in the world. All these were circumstances, it must be acknowledged, highly favourable to this Apostle's reception of the Gospel, when it should be preached to him by Christ Himself; highly favourable to his ready obedience to the divine Call, whenever in mercy it should be given him.

Having heard the Baptist's testimony concerning the Messiah, that He was the Lamb of God, ordained to be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world,
you

you will not wonder that this Apostle followed our Saviour to His place of abode; that he there sought His divine instructions; and that, from all which he saw and heard, his faith in Christ was strengthened and confirmed. He is now solicitous to impart to his brother, Simon Peter, the most interesting, and most important intelligence in the world: *We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ; we have found HIM*, of whom Moses and the Prophets have spoken, JESUS the son of GOD: We have found HIM, whom the Prophets describe as *the Desire of all nations*, the long expected happiness of mankind.—The natural warmth and eagerness of St. Peter's mind, we may be well assured, would not suffer him to be indifferent about this joyful news: He hastens with his brother, St. *Andrew*, to obtain full satisfaction in the matter, wherein it seemed

that not themselves only, but the whole world, was concerned. They hear, and are convinced; but do not, with instantaneous eagerness, put themselves forward, as the disciples of this new Instructor. — They return to their humble but laborious profession in Galilee; but we may reasonably suppose, that many very serious reflections on what they had heard and seen—that much and very interesting discourse on a topic of such infinite magnitude and importance engaged them both, amidst the labours of their calling. Almost a whole year had now passed, since their first introduction to the Saviour of the world; when the event, to which my text refers, served fully to open their eyes, convince their understanding, and confirm their faith.

We are not to suppose, that the Discerner of hearts, (for such our Saviour in very many

many instances discovered Himself to be, even in His state of humiliation) was ignorant of the impression, which His doctrine, His miracles, His general demeanor had made on the minds of these two humble fishermen, St. Andrew and St. Peter: nor are we to imagine, that it was a mere matter of accident, which produced the event recorded in the text. He, who knows, not only what is best and fittest to be done, but also what is the best and fittest time for doing it, so contrived it, as to be walking near the sea of Galilee, when these two brethren had long been toiling in vain, and were casting their nets into the sea. He thoroughly knew whom he addressed, and how well their minds were prepared to receive the invitation, when, in an instant, He said unto them, *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.* The effect was such as fully answered His expectation:

tion: *they straightway left their nets and followed Him.*

Here you must allow me to observe that this case was a special one: that the occasion was of an extraordinary nature; and that no example is hereby offered to any man to quit an honest useful employment, by which himself and his family are to be supported, in order to obey the calls of a religion, which prescribes *industry*, as well as *devotion*, and which demands of us a due care of our dependents, as well as a due attention to our duty to God. But thus far the example may surely be allowed to operate with its full force; by inducing us to leave whatever advantages the world may offer to our acceptance, if they cannot be obtained but by a neglect of our first and most important duties which we owe to God. Our Saviour here tells them, that there should be some degree of similitude
between

between the employment to which He was about to call them, and that wherein they were at present engaged. *Follow me*, says he, *and I will make you fishers of men*. The kingdom of heaven, or the state of the Gospel upon earth, our Saviour some where compares to a *net*, in which were enclosed a *great multitude of fishes*, both bad and good; a final separation of which, He tells us, is reserved for the great day, when our all-wise Judge shall make an everlasting distinction betwixt the good and evil; betwixt such as observe, and such as despise His laws. To be *fishers of men*, then, seems to imply an earnest and unwearied care and endeavour to bring within the Church of Christ such as should be disposed to receive, and rightly to improve the blessings of the Gospel. Our Lord foretold, and the event justified his prediction, that they who had been honestly and industriously

ously engaged in a laborious worldly calling, would be not less powerfully assisted in a work of infinitely greater importance; where the conversion of sinners from the errors of their ways, and the raising them up from the depths of ignorance and delusion, to the light of the knowledge of the truth, would be the great and immediate object of their labours.

Under this powerful assistance, St. *Andrew*, we are told, having constantly attended our Saviour's person, from the time of his having been called to the office of an Apostle, went forth, after our Saviour's ascension, to the province, allotted him, as it should seem, by some superior direction. The lot was probably cast, which was to determine what parts of the world the disciples should take; which lot, in a matter of such infinite consequence, we may suppose was neither without their accustomed solemn

solemn address to heaven, nor altogether undirected by infinite wisdom. In the course of his ministry, he ventured boldly to rebuke vice, even though it was armed with that authority, the force of which it pleased God that this disciple should eminently feel. The idolatrous governor of the country where he preached the Gospel, sentenced him first to be scourged, and then crucified, with some circumstances, which rendered his death miserably tedious to himself, though peculiarly instructive to the witnesses of his sufferings. His hands and his feet were not nailed to the cross, as his blessed Saviour's had been; his death was therefore more lingering; but his faith and patience were stronger than death, in whatever form it might present itself.

Which of you will not be affected when I recite to you this holy martyr's address to the cross, on which he was about to be
extended,

extended, as soon as he came within sight of it? "Long," says he, "have I expected and desired this happy hour: welcome the cross on which I am about to be lifted up, for the sake of that Gospel, which He who died on thee for the sins of the world, left as an invaluable legacy! I come to thee with joy and triumph, intreating thee to receive me as a disciple and follower of Him, who offered Himself upon thee, as an all-sufficient sacrifice and propitiation for us. Thou wert eminently consecrated by bearing the body of Christ, and wert more adorned with his limbs, than if thou hadst been inlaid with pearls: thou hast long been expected by me; thou didst receive my Lord and Saviour before me: to thee I have long looked forward with impatience; and now rejoice that I am arrived at thee. O! be thou the means of conveying me safe to my blessed

Master;

Master ; who not long since wert the instrument of conveying the inestimable blessing of Redemption to mankind." To this cross he remained bound with cords for two days ; during all which time he never ceased exhorting the people to continue stedfast in the faith, which he had delivered to them. Great importunities, we are told, were made use of to spare his life ; whilst he earnestly entreated that they might be of no avail, but that he might then be suffered to depart ; to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.

The lessons which this festival is designed to teach us are various. First, when, like St. *Andrew*, we ourselves are made acquainted with the truth and importance of Religion, we should shew the same earnestness, which *he* did, in hastening to his brother St. Peter with the glad tidings, that he had found the *Messiah* ; by endeavouring

vouring to make all our relations, friends and dependents the true followers and servants of the Blessed Jesus. Secondly, we should be always willing to obey the calls of Duty and Religion, which, as I have already observed, may be made perfectly consistent with the honest and faithful discharge of the duties of our several stations in the world. Thirdly, we learn (from this Apostle's previous attachment to St. John the Baptist, before he was called by our Saviour,) that a course of humiliation and repentance is the fittest preparation for the graces and virtues prescribed by the Gospel. And lastly, though *we*, in these happier days, may not be exposed to the sorrows and tribulations, which the first professors and teachers of Christianity were under the necessity of encountering, in the cause of Religion, we must yet remember, that no suffering is to be declined, whether

whether of censure, ridicule, or reproach, if this should be our portion in the way to heaven: thus chearfully taking up the cross, without provoking contempt by indiscretion and folly; and rejoicing, when we are counted worthy to suffer for the name of JESUS; being assured, that those momentary trials, to which we may be liable in our Christian course, will, at the end thereof, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, through Jesus Christ our LORD:

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, three Persons and one GOD, be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, world without end. AMEN.

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if this should be our portion in the way to
heaven: thus cheerfully taking up the
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we are counted worthy to suffer for the
name of Jesus, boldly asserting that there is
momentary trials, to which we may be
liable in our Christian course, will enable
and thereby work out for us a far more
valuable and eternal weight of glory, through
Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.
To answer, said the Father and the
Holy Ghost, that Father and Son,
be all present and glorify themselves and
through, with our Father and Son.

SAINT THOMAS

THE APOSTLE.

DECEMBER 21.

SAINT THOMAS

THE APOSTLE.

DECEMBER 21.

SAINT THOMAS.

St. JOHN XX. 29.

Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

IN the character of the Apostle, St. Thomas, (the outline of whose history the plan which I have proposed leads me to set before you,) we have a remarkable instance of slowness to admit conviction on the one hand, and of a readiness to make the fullest acknowledgement of it, when once it had taken place, on the other. When we hear this incredulous

c 3 disciple

disciple yielding at length to the satisfaction produced by his senses, on having seen, and even touched, the wounds of his blessed Master—when we listen to his fervent exclamation, *My LORD and my GOD!*—we know not whether we should most gratefully admire—His goodness and mercy, who for the confirmation of our faith, suffered this Apostle to doubt of our Saviour's resurrection, and thus led him to bear such ample testimony to the Divinity of the Son of GOD; or, the gracious condescension of the blessed JESUS, in pardoning the weakness of his servant, and consenting to the removal of every obstacle to his faith in this essential article of Christianity. It has pleased GOD, by this incidental circumstance of St. *Thomas's* backwardness to believe, to furnish us with a most undeniable argument, for our conviction beyond all doubt, or scruple, that the
very

very same body, which by the Jews was crucified and slain, was raised from the power of death, and completely restored to life. Such as have themselves had too much slowness of heart to believe what is so fully declared in the Gospel, concerning the Divinity of our Saviour, have been inclined to treat this rapturous exclamation of "MY LORD AND MY GOD!" merely as a strong expression of wonder and astonishment: but such persons by no means consider the words in their proper signification: they are a full, perfect, unequivocal acknowledgement, on the ground of a most entire conviction, that HE, who could thus raise Himself to life, and who, by so doing, had accomplished His own prophecies concerning His resurrection, could be no other than THE MIGHTY GOD.—It is as though the Apostle had said, "Thou art my very LORD and Master, whose doctrines I have received

received with delight; to whose miracles I have so frequently been an astonished witness; and of whose almighty power over the principalities and powers of darkness I can now no longer entertain a moment's doubt."

I have dwelt the more particularly upon this topic, because I think it is, what it was intended to be, the fullest argument imaginable of the truth of that doctrine, which I consider as the chief Corner-stone of our Religion. Our blessed Saviour's reply in the words of the text manifestly declares, that He *admitted* the Apostle's confession of his faith, and considered it, as, in its obvious meaning, justly applicable to Himself. What must be *their* sentiments of Him, whom they see accepting as his just right the title of "LORD," and of "GOD," and who yet continue to assert that He was a mere man! The dilemma into which they

they are thrown is fatal to their cause; the difficulties they have to conquer are unsurmountable; and their impiety is without excuse. Instead of reproving the forwardness of this Disciple in giving Him that adorable appellation *My LORD and my GOD*, He saith unto him, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:—Believed what?* believed that I am GOD, as well as man, and that I have incontrovertibly declared my almighty power, by my resurrection from the dead. *Blessed are they, that have not seen; blessed are they, that, without this sort of evidence which thou hast required, have yet believed that I am their LORD and their GOD.*

Having now declared to you the satisfaction which I myself derive, and which I trust every impartial hearer or reader of this history will not fail to derive, from such a clear, absolute, and unqualified declaration of the Divinity of the Author and

Finisher

Finisher of our faith, I am not to forget that you will expect from me a short account of the Apostle, whose martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel we this day commemorate; and whose slowness to believe may be considered as stamping an additional value on his faith, which required such demonstration; inasmuch as it serves to convince us, that he was not afterwards led on by any enthusiastic fervour to persevere in his profession even unto death; but that he was supported by the fullest conviction, that the Gospel which he preached contained the words of eternal life, and was the record of Him, who was very God, and very man.

Of this Apostle's kindred and country we have very little account in the evangelical history: he was called Didymus, which signifies a twin; either as having actually been so, or as having assumed a name, which in the Greek language is of
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the same signification with that of Thomas among the Hebrews: he was certainly a Jew; and probably was of Galilee: and there are some circumstances which incline us to believe, that he pursued the occupation of fishing; as we find him accompanying St. Peter on his return to that employment, after our Saviour's resurrection.

To the credit of this Apostle, it ought to be observed, that, although, in the instance before us, we find a backwardness to receive conviction, there does not upon other occasions appear any want of zeal, or Christian fortitude; but rather an eagerness to meet danger, instead of a wish to avoid it. When the Apostles were dissuading our Saviour from returning into Judea, because the Jews had sought to stone him, (in which resolution He, however, persists, that He might raise up La-

zarus from the dead,) St. *Thomas* proposes that they should at all events accompany their Master: "*Let us also go that we may die with Him:*"—Let us be partakers of His sufferings, whatever they may be, or how shall we be partakers of His glory?

Throughout the whole of this Apostle's character, there is a more than ordinary spirit of enquiry, an unwillingness blindly to embrace any doctrine, which had not the full conviction of his judgment and understanding. Jesus said, "I go to my Father's house to prepare mansions for you:" this seems to satisfy the other disciples; but *Thomas*, seeking for yet farther satisfaction on the subject, saith unto Him, LORD, "*we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?*" This question, tho' urged for the particular purpose of individual information, produces, as on many other occasions, an answer of
universal

universal importance ; and of infinite consolation to all true believers ; *Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* Thus doth our Saviour, with equal condescension and wisdom, declare, that He is the person sent by the Father into the world, to shew to mankind the path which leadeth to eternal life ; and that they who keep in the way which he hath pointed out to them, will not fail, through His blessing, to arrive at the kingdom of heaven.

With respect to the country in which the Apostle St. *Thomas* exercised his ministry, the province allotted him was *Parthia*. He is said to have visited the region from which the wise men came, who brought presents to the new-born Saviour of the world ; and to have baptized several of its inhabitants, and appointed them as his fellow-labourers in the propagation of the Gospel.

Gospel. He extended his labours to the inhabitants of India; where the bramins or priests conspired to put him to death. In his retirement, for the purpose of devotion, they furrounded him with an armed force—they loaded him with darts and stones—at length, one, more compassionate than the rest, pierced him through with a lance, and put an end to his sufferings. One act of decent attention was not denied him: the object of their envy and their apprehension being now removed, his persecutors did not object to the interment of his body in the church, which he himself had caused to be erected.

This is the outline of this distinguished Apostle's life, character, and sufferings; our purpose in the commemoration of his excellent virtues, of his heroic constancy, as well as of that mixture of human frailty and infirmity to which the best of men are
liable,

liable, cannot better be answered, than by deducing from what has been said the following instructions, and applying them to our own practice.

First, then, we must needs have remarked in this Apostle's general turn of mind a disposition favourable to Religion, and well inclined to assent to its truths, and even to encounter danger in the avowal of them; but on certain occasions, and particularly on that to which the text relates, we find a degree of incredulity, nearly bordering on absolute unbelief: yet he instantly yielded, when the desired means of conviction were afforded him; and afterwards earnestly wished to make amends for his backwardness to believe, by the fulness of his acknowledgement, and by his decisive testimony in favour of our Saviour's Godhead.

From the patience and condescension of our blessed Lord in thus bearing with
the

the infirmities of his servant, let us learn not hastily to reject those as incapable of conviction, who may not be so ready as we could wish, to receive the truths of the Gospel: we must be content, by little and little, to overcome the prejudices which indispose men to receive those doctrines, which may happen to be adverse to their conduct: if we can, through God's blessing on our endeavours, persuade them to *do* His will, they will not long oppose themselves to the *precepts* of our holy Religion.

Secondly, we observe that the text pronounces them blessed who *have not seen*; have not had that sort of demonstration which St. *Thomas* required, that Christ was actually risen from the dead, and yet have believed this fact: it is a truth, which must ever be considered as the great bulwark of our Religion; and it must needs
be

be received on the testimony which the Scriptures afford us; the testimony of enemies as well as friends; the testimony of men and of angels; and the testimony of Christ Himself, "I am He that liveth and was dead, *and behold I am alive for evermore.*"

The Gospel, which we profess to believe, and which we receive as the unerring rule of our conduct, stands confirmed on the foundation of prophecies fulfilled; of miracles performed; of most authentic records of historical facts; in support of which many of its true believers have cheerfully sacrificed their lives. It has also such internal evidence of its truth, and of its divine original, as no other system of religion ever possessed. It is pure, and tends to the advancement of purity in all that embrace it; its precepts are holy, and wise, and good; its tendency is to make us happy

in this life; chiefly by holding forth to us the blisful prospect of glory in the next, through the infinite merits of that atonement, which its Author was pleased to offer for the sins of the world. Let our faith in this Gospel be the prevailing principle of our religious conduct; and let no dangers discourage us from the profession of it. Let us, with the Apostle of this day, shew a disposition to practise what we know to be the will of God; and if we have any doubt or perplexity in our minds concerning matters of a deeper and mysterious nature, let us hope, that God will reveal to our humble and well-directed enquiries as much as his wisdom seeth necessary for us to know, in order to our everlasting salvation. Let us be thankful for the **decisive evidence** afforded us of all that is necessary for us to know and believe to our soul's health; and as to those
secret

secret things which belong unto the LORD our God, let us wait with patience for that hour, when the mysteries of God shall be fully revealed to our enlarged capacities; when we shall see God as He is, and dwell with Him in bliss unutterable for ever and ever.

Now to God the Father, &c.

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 pacities; when we shall see God as He
 is, and dwell with Him in His manner,
 able for ever and ever.

Now to God the Father, &c.

NATIVITY OF CHRIST

DECEMBER 25

THE
NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

DECEMBER 25.

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NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

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22

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH IX. 5.

Unto Us a Child is born ; unto Us a Son is given ; and the government shall be upon His shoulder : and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

THE Prophet, whose prediction of the Messiah is here recited, is with good reason stiled, " The Evangelical Prophet ;" his expressions on many other occasions as well as in the passage before us resembling rather an history than a pro-

phesy of the blessings and glad tidings of the gospel-dispensation; "Unto Us a Child *is* born, unto Us a Son *is* given;" that is, in the councils of His infinite wisdom, with whom things past, present, and future, form one unchangeable⁷ period; and who is the *same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*: one day with Him being as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The nature of this highly-distinguished Festival carrying our thoughts to the humiliating circumstances of our Saviour's birth, it may be the more necessary that we should insist on those characters of the Messiah, which declare Him to be Very God, as well as Very Man. To this the sacred history seems particularly attentive, in the narrative of the life of Jesus, from the first to the latest moment of it. Even before His nativity, Heaven itself interposes

in

in asserting His dignity, who, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, should be called the SON of GOD. His birth, in a state of the utmost degradation, is celebrated by a choir of Angels in that hymn which so aptly described the purpose of His coming: "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." A bright star in the firmament of heaven is appointed to direct the Eastern sages to the place of His nativity; and costly offerings of *gold*, and *frankincense*, and *myrrh*, are presented to Him, who was denied the ordinary accommodations of ordinary children. At the moment of His condescension to the first ordinance of circumcision, a name was given Him, (the name of JESUS,) "above every name that can be named in heaven or on earth."

Thus

Thus might we go on through every period of His life, even to the moment of His departure out of the world; when the sun was darkened—the earth shook—the rocks were rent—the graves were opened—the dead arose—and all nature seemed to sympathize with the God of nature suffering a death of inexpressible humiliation on the cross.

With minds thus prepared, let us consider the Prophet's description of the Messiah in the words of the text.

Unto Us a Child is born—In all respects as truly a child, as any of the children of men, for whose sake He condescended to be born.

Unto Us a Son is given—Witness, among many other instances of filial obedience, His going down with His parents to Nazareth, and becoming *subject unto them*.

But

But here the Prophet elevates our minds from the contemplation of the Son of a poor virgin, to the character of the Son of God, contrasting the glory of the latter with the humiliation of the former in one and the same person. For, passing from the recital of His self-abasement, he next declares the supremacy of His spiritual dominion.

1. *The government shall be upon His shoulder:* meaning, that the charge and government of His Church, with which He hath promised to be present to the end of time, shall be laid upon Him; to illustrate which, the Prophet introduces an allusion to the custom of wearing the * key, the ensign of power and authority, suspended from, or borne upon the shoulder. He was appointed *King*, according to the

* See Bishop Lowth on Chap. ix. and Chap. xxii. of this Prophecy.

44 THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

Psalmist's prophetic expression, on God's holy hill of Sion, to be the governor, the guardian, the protector and preserver of His Church; and also to be the sovereign of all the empires of the world, whether temporal or spiritual; to dispose of them according to His infinite justice, and wisdom, and goodness; to rule the kings of the earth, who rise up against Him, with a rod of iron, and to break in pieces the sons of pride, like a potter's vessel.

The Prophet then proceeds to the dignified titles of this Child, which should be born:

2. *His Name shall be called* WONDERFUL.

When the Angel-Jehovah appeared to *Manoah*, previous to the birth of his extraordinary son, and the question was asked, "What is thy name; that when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour?" The answer to this question was,

"Why

“Why askest thou my name, seeing it is *secret*?” The original word * is, “seeing it is *wonderful*;” the same word, by which the same Divine Person, under a different appearance, is here described by the Prophet: *wonderful*, as hath been already declared, in every circumstance, from His miraculous conception, through the whole course of His unexampled life, even to the re-assumption of his glory, on His ascension into Heaven; the particulars of which it is impossible to review, and not without hesitation pronounce, that the title, *Wonderful*, is, with all the reason in the world, appropriate to the Child here said to be born; to the Son here announced, as given to the world.

3. His name shall be called COUNSELLOR.

The all-wise interpreter of the divine law: He came to declare the will of

עֹלָם אֱלֹהִים, Judg. xiii. 18. אֱלֹהִים, Isa. ix. 5.

God;

God; and His *counsel* is, that we should observe and obey it: He came to deliver a complete rule of duty, and His *counsel* is, that we should, in every part of our conduct, live conformably to it: He came to exemplify to the world, in His person, in His character, and above all, in His infinitely meritorious sufferings, the stupendous counsels of infinite wisdom, justice, power, and mercy, respecting the restoration of fallen man: And, lastly, whereas the revelation of the counsels of Heaven was made known to our fathers, by * different portions, and in various manners, by dreams and visions, by oracles, signs, and prophecies; they were communicated completely to us, in these last days, by the still, small, but persuasive voice of Him, that “spake as never man spake,” and whose doc-

* Πολυμέρως καὶ πολυτρόπως.

trines

trines were accompanied and confirmed by the irrefragable testimony of miracles.

4. His name shall be called THE MIGHTY GOD.

If there is any meaning in words, this expression, unless it can be done away by some fair interpretation, is decisive in favour of that apostolical declaration : amidst innumerable others, that in the person, thus humbled for our sakes, *dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* : He is described as “ the brightness of God’s glory, as the express image of His person, and as upholding all things by the word of His power.” What language can denote Divinity in the person and character of the Son of Man, if this is inadequate to the purpose ? Our astonishment can only be equalled by our pity and concern, when we see men studious to evade such direct and positive testimony, for no better purpose,

pose, than to rob Christianity of its brightest jewel, and the professors of Christianity of their surest comfort. If *the Child Jesus* is not also the MIGHTY GOD, the whole system of our religion falls at once to the ground; we are yet in our sins, and still under the sentence of condemnation. For no *Man*, nor any being inferior to the MIGHTY GOD, could have redeemed a world of fallen sinners, or make an adequate atonement for them: that act of grace must have remained unaccomplished for ever.

5. But, His name shall also be called THE EVERLASTING FATHER: these words have been well translated*, *the Father of the everlasting age*.

The several dispensations of God, have been divided into different periods or

* עוֹלָם is thus rendered by Bishop Lowth and by Dr. Kennicott; the latter of whom had thrown great light on several obscure and difficult passages which occur in this beautiful chapter.

ages, as the patriarchal, the legal, the historical, and the prophetical. All these were ordained to continue for their allotted time, and to have an end when the purposes of their appointment should be accomplished. The ceremonial law, which was given by Moses, ceased, when grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The types were no longer of use, when the Personage, to whom they directed men's attention, appeared; and the prophecies ceased of course, when He, in whom they were exactly fulfilled, was manifested to the world. Thus were all the preceding ages or periods, swallowed up in that, which was to continue, and will remain so long as the world shall last. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, that God, by his Son*, *made the worlds*, but whoever attends to the original expression,

* Τὸς αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν. Heb. i. 2.

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will

will see at once, that it alludes to the different ages or periods of the world, and does not offer the slightest argument in favor of that incomprehensible notion of a plurality of worlds: the period of the gospel is the last dispensation of God's mercy; the last declaration of His will to mankind: this period of the gospel shall continue, till *faith* shall be improved into perfect knowledge; till *hope* shall be swallowed up in perfect enjoyment; and till the capacities of our souls shall be so infinitely enlarged, as to enable us to behold God as he is, and be made partakers of that fulness of joy which is in His presence for evermore.

Of this we must have despaired for ever, if *His name* had not, lastly, been called, THE PRINCE OF PEACE—the great Author of Peace between heaven and earth, at variance with each other—

the

the gracious Reconciler of man when in a state of rebellion against God—at enmity with himself, and with all that is valuable and dear to him, whilst at enmity with his Creator. To restore us to the Divine favour, was the great errand of this Prince of Peace; by His ministration, to prepare us for mercy; by His doctrine of repentance, to admit us to terms of forgiveness; and to work such a change in our hearts, our wills, and our affections, as might render us capable of that glory, which He died to purchase for us. In Him, who is our Peace, we behold that enmity abolished, which would for ever have separated between us and our God; and through Him, with the confidence of children, we dare approach the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the endearing appellation of “His Father and our Father, of His God and our God.”

I have dwelt so long on the several particulars of this very interesting passage of scripture, as to leave myself but little opportunity of enforcing the duties, which this holy season more especially demands of us: let me, however, briefly, but earnestly, intreat you to meet it always, with a most grateful, but well-corrected festivity of heart; like those, who are truly sensible of the blessings it conveys, and not unmindful of the obligations which it lays upon them. If ever sin were more exceeding sinful at one time than another, it is when we are commemorating the mercy of God, in sending His Son into the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and if ever neglect of duty were more than ordinarily criminal, it is, when, in celebrating His gracious entrance into the world, we shew ourselves regardless of His last injunction on his leaving it.

When

When He bids us receive the memorials of His death and sufferings, in the holy communion, let us reflect, that He who requireth this service at our hands, *therefore* lived, that He might die for us ; and *therefore* died, that we, through the merits of His death, might live for ever. Under this impression, we can never be indifferent to this, or any other part of our duty ; we shall, through the help of those means of grace which are afforded us, labour to purify ourselves, even as he is pure ; that when He, who, as at this time, visited the world in great humility, as its Saviour, shall return in the clouds of heaven as its Judge, we may be received into His eternal and glorious kingdom, where, with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth ever, One God, world without end. Amen.

When He bids us receive the ransom-
 rials of His death and sufferings in the
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 its Judge, we may be received into His
 eternal and glorious abode, without
 Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy
 Ghost, He liveth and reigneth ever, One
 God, with our Father, Amen.

SAINT STEPHEN

SAINT STEPHEN.

DECEMBER 26.

SAINT STEPHEN.

And now, I am going to speak of
the first martyr, Saint Stephen.
He was a man of great power
and grace, who did great
wonders and signs among the
people. He was full of
faith and courage, and he
was the first to be stoned
for his faith.

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stoned for his faith.

SAINT STEPHEN.

ACTS VII. 59, 60.

*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God,
and saying, "LORD JESUS, receive my
Spirit:" and he kneeled down, and cried
with a loud Voice, "LORD, lay not this
sin to their charge;" and when he had
said this, he fell asleep.*

FROM celebrating that great my-
stery of Godliness, God manifest in
the flesh, (a mystery, wherein it appears,
that Heaven and Earth were interested,
the Angels delighting to proclaim the
wonders of Divine mercy,) we are now

called upon to commemorate the exemplary virtues of that Saint, who had the honour of being the first follower of the Captain of our Salvation in the noble army of Christian Martyrs—of whose character and doctrines we have perhaps a more full and circumstantial account, than of any other in this illustrious catalogue. He is first described to us as full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost: as endued with the power of doing many miracles and wonders among the people; consequently an object of much envy and jealousy to the members of the synagogue. From various quarters they collected themselves, employing all the means which sophistry and malice could suggest, in order to overthrow his doctrine, and vilify his person; but they were unable to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. It was necessary, therefore, that they should have recourse

course to more violent measures; and accordingly we are told, that they suborned false witnesses to declare, that they had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God; that he ceased not to profane the holy Temple and disobey the Law. As a proof of what they asserted, they declared, that they had heard him say, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he preached, should destroy the Temple, and should change the customs which Moses delivered unto them. In the midst of these accusations, whilst they who sat in the council were watching the effects, which they would produce on the Saint thus wickedly arraigned, instead of any token of shame and confusion, they saw nothing but beams of innocence, and light, and glory, in his countenance; they looked stedfastly upon him, and beheld his face, as it had been the face of an Angel. To

their malice he opposes meekness ; to their falsehood, truth ; to their rancour, charity ; and to their ill-founded accusations, sound, solid, and substantial arguments. These are so fully set forth in the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that justice could not be done to them without transcribing the whole chapter ; to which therefore I shall rather beg leave to refer you ; only observing, that their general design is to convince his adversaries, that those external rites upon which they laid so great a stress, were not so indispensably necessary as they supposed them to be—that the ordinance of circumcision had been only made use of, as a token of the covenant betwixt God and his people for several ages—that God had commanded first a Tabernacle to be erected by Moses, and afterwards a Temple by Solomon—but that the infinitely great and glorious BEING

to

to whom they were dedicated, needeth not a dwelling made with hands for his residence, because He filleth Heaven and Earth with His presence. He requireth, however, the dedication of our hearts, and souls, and bodies, to His service, not only in our private retirement, but also in the *congregation of the Saints*: but these external worshippers, whose Fathers had persecuted the Prophets, resting the whole of their religion on outward performances, had resisted the Holy Ghost, and had betrayed and murdered the JUST ONE, without any regard to that salvation, which He came to accomplish for the children of men.—Such a discourse as this was received, (as it might reasonably be expected,) with every indication of rage and resentment: they were cut to the heart, the historian tells us, and they gnashed upon him with their teeth. But
he,

he, being filled with the Holy Ghost, was regardless of their fury; and being favoured with an heavenly vision, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; on his public acknowledgement of which eminent interposition of divine favour, he was instantly convicted of blasphemy, and sentenced to be stoned to death, the punishment ordained in the law for the most enormous crimes.

And now we behold this holy Saint, in a close imitation of his blessed Master, kneeling upon his knees, and with uplifted hands, imploring forgiveness for his murderers; beseeching God, almost in the very words of the gracious Saviour of mankind, not to lay the guilt of his blood to their charge; and after recommending his soul to God, we are told, that *He fell asleep*. The expression, here used by the sacred writer, is descriptive of the death

of

of the body, under the most pleasing image that could be employed on the occasion: sweet was that sleep, from which the voice of the Archangel, the trump of God, would awaken him to joy unspeakable, and full of glory: sweet was that sleep, into which this eminent servant of God was now fallen; who was gone to rest from all his sufferings and sorrows on account of the Gospel, which he had stood forth, as one of its first and noblest advocates, to defend. *Blessed are the dead, which thus sleep in the LORD. Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.*

It is not without a particular intention, that a circumstance is here mentioned, of which I shall not forbear to take notice; which implicates one, who was afterwards the chief of the Apostles, in the guilt of this cruel transaction. We are told, that the witnesses, whose hands were to be
first

first on the person accused, having stripped themselves of their clothes, to be more at liberty to perpetrate their horrid purpose with effect, *laid them down at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul.* We are told, that Saul, afterwards the very chief of the Apostles, was at that time *consenting to his death*; and therefore fairly within the reach of the holy Martyr's intercession, when he prayed for his murderers. And which of us will venture to say, that the most extraordinary conversion of that zealous and bitter adversary to the truth was not, in part at least, the effect of this righteous man's fervent prayer, at that awful moment, in his behalf?

The design of these lectures now leads me to set before you the lessons, which we have to learn from the commemoration of this first Martyr's sufferings, and of his most
eminent

eminent virtues. We here behold an illustrious Saint of God, who had been trained up under the immediate instruction of our blessed Saviour: we do not therefore wonder to find him described as "full of faith and the Holy Ghost;" as endued with a more than ordinary portion of that heavenly spirit, which had been lately poured forth on the Apostles. He was admirably skilled in all parts of the Christian doctrine, and endued with great eloquence to publish and declare it; enriched with many miraculous gifts and powers, and blessed with a spirit and resolution to encounter the most potent opposition. We find him selected as one of those, who were appointed to be coadjutors with the Apostles in the ministry of the Gospel; in superintending the necessities of the poor, and presiding over the temporal as well as spiritual concerns of the Church. That a person

so

so eminent for Christian piety should be an object of Jewish malice and envy, is not to be wondered at; and we are to learn from this, not to be discouraged by any of that opposition or contradiction to which we may be exposed, in the regular, faithful, and conscientious discharge of our Christian duty. From St. Stephen's *mode of defence* we may learn, that the best vindication of our conduct is by an appeal to those Scriptures, from which our rule of life is drawn, and to which it is our duty to take care that it be conformed. The enemies of the Faith are never so effectually silenced, as by our shewing that we believe the truths which we profess and maintain, and that they have a purifying and invigorating influence on our hearts and lives: and that while we are zealous advocates for the outward rites and ordinances of our religion, we should
consider

consider them as means of grace, given to us for our improvement in those essential virtues, which adorn the Christian character.

From the unshaken firmness of this great and eminent Martyr we may learn, that he whose faith is founded on a rock, hath nothing to fear from the storms and tempests, which the malice of the devil, or the hatred of ungodly men may raise against him: and from his charity towards his enemies, which accompanied him to his latest moment, we may learn, that the advocates for the truth never appear to such advantage, as when all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, are far removed from them, with every species of malice and ill-will—when, being reviled, they bless; when being defamed, they excuse; when being persecuted, they endure; and when under the last and severest of all

all sufferings, they are intercessors with God, in behalf of those, at whose hands they suffer. Such extremities, blessed be God, we have no immediate cause to apprehend; and therefore this, which may be considered as the *perfection* of charity we may never be called upon to practise. Let us not however fail on all occasions to exercise this virtue, in cases of inferior trial. These will occur, in a greater or less degree, to all that are determined to oppose the maxims and practices of the world, whenever they are found to stand in the way of their duty: all such as are thus resolved to live godly in Christ Jesus, the Apostle hath taught to expect a certain portion of the world's contempt, amounting to a kind of persecution; but under such circumstances we are encouraged to rejoice and be exceeding glad, provided the opposition which we

meet

meet with is not drawn upon ourselves by wilful imprudence, needless singularity, and a careless indifference, whether our good "be or be not evil spoken of."

We have already adverted to the particular expression which the sacred historian here makes use of, when he would describe the death of this blessed Saint. "Having said this," having commended his spirit into the hands of God, and implored the divine mercy in behalf of his murderers, we are told that *he fell asleep*. Hence we are taught, how sweet is the death of true believers, and with what comfort it is attended. We see the inestimable value of that disposition of mind which can smooth our passage through the vale of the shadow of death. And it is certain, that only a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, productive of holiness in our disposition, and integrity in our lives, will enable us

to commit our souls with comfort into the hands of the LORD JESUS, and to sleep in peace, in joyful expectation of a blessed resurrection:

Of which may it please GOD of His grace and mercy to make us all partakers, through His infinite merits, who standeth at the right hand of GOD, to succour all those that suffer for Him, our only Mediator and Advocate;

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, three Persons and one GOD, be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, henceforth and for evermore. AMEN.

SAINT JOHN

THE APOSTLE, AND EVANGELIST.

DECEMBER 27.

SAINT JOHN

THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

SAINT JOHN

THE EVANGELIST.

St. JOHN XX. 2.

—The disciple whom Jesus loved.—

IF ever there were found in any merely human character whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report, we may readily conceive they abounded in that of the Evangelist whom we commemorate this day. The words of the text are sufficient to remove any doubt, which we might entertain on this point. The

appellation of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," must imply something more than ordinarily amiable in the person thus eminently distinguished; whom we find leaning on his divine Master's breast, and admitted to a more than ordinary degree of confidence in the most trying moments of His life. Witness our Blessed Saviour's address to him from the Cross; when, as it were, regardless of his own tormenting sufferings, He shews His solicitude for His afflicted Mother. Seeing her, and this His favourite disciple standing by her, He saith unto His mother, "Woman, behold thy son." Then saith He to the disciple, "Behold thy mother." We wonder not to hear, that, from that hour, this disciple took her unto his own home. Nor can we doubt, that the blessed Virgin experienced every possible mark of dutiful attention and honourable regard, from the

hands

hands of the Evangelist. This particular esteem for St. *John* was manifested by our LORD on several other occasions: he was one of the selected witnesses of some of His most striking miracles; he was considered by the other disciples, as honoured with the greatest degree of familiarity by our Saviour; and St. Peter, who on other occasions was sufficiently forward, when desirous of putting a very interesting question to our Saviour, "Which of them should betray their Master?" chose rather that this question should be asked by St. *John*, as the disciple least likely to offend by proposing it, and most likely to obtain a satisfactory reply.

Of the genealogy, the employment, the writings and the general character of this Evangelist, you will expect that I should say a few words. He was a Galilean, the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the

younger brother to St. James the Great. He was brought up by his father to be a fisherman; and, together with St. James, was called to be an apostle and a disciple of our Saviour. These are the outlines which the sacred writers have given us of this most eminent person—who was one of the many examples of His infinite wisdom and goodness, who chose, for His followers and immediate attendants, the poor of this world, who (were yet rich in faith,) to be heirs of the promises, which God hath made unto them that love Him. The early stage of his life, at which St. *John* was called to the profession of Christianity, is a circumstance, which must not be passed over; because it certainly serves to heighten the virtuous self-denial of his character. Not yet arrived at *thirty* years of age, he was called to the dignity of the apostolical office; which prescribed

prescribed gravity, though it did not demand severity; which required seriousness, without affectation; and habitual sobriety and devotion, without ostentatious parade. We admire the beauties of Religion wherever we find them; but youthful piety never fails to attract our highest approbation and esteem. We delight to see an offering made to God of the best which the Christian hath in his power to dedicate; the flower of his youth, the vigour of his mind, the perfection of his bodily and mental abilities. And while we dwell with pleasure on the tokens of our Evangelist's zeal and affection, we are inclined to cast a veil over that excess of resentment, which would have called down divine vengeance on the Samaritans' refusing to receive his Master. We can also, on the same ground, excuse the ambitious wish to be seated on our Saviour's right hand.

hand in His kingdom, in a kind of exclusive preference above the rest of his associates and fellow-disciples.

In his affectionate and dutiful attention to the blessed Virgin this Apostle is reported to have continued, till about fifteen years after our LORD's ascension; at which time it is supposed this holy person followed her Son, her LORD, and her Saviour, to the mansions of glory, prepared for the faithful in heaven. He then departed from Judea, and went to Ephesus; but extended his apostolical labours over many parts of the eastern world. It was at Ephesus, that he so eminently distinguished himself as the steadfast advocate for the Divinity of the Son of God: it was at Ephesus, (perhaps after his return from banishment,) that he wrote his Gospel; in the very entrance upon which you must needs have been often struck with his open and undisguised assertion

assertion of that truth, which in those early times was so daringly and so impiously called in question; though not more daringly, nor more impiously, it must be acknowledged, than in these latter days. To those who denied our Saviour's existence before His incarnation, this Evangelist, fulfilling his character of *Boanerges*, a son of thunder, delivers, in terms of the utmost sublimity, the mysterious doctrine of His absolute Divinity; "In the beginning was the Word," by which title the Messiah is peculiarly distinguished; "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." It seems impossible that any words could more fully and unequivocally declare that my-

stery of godliness, which is the only sure foundation of the Christian's hope, *GOD manifest in the flesh*. And I am persuaded, that whilst we retain this passage of scripture deeply impressed on our minds, the stedfastness of our faith will not easily be shaken by a few passages, which seem to speak of our Saviour in terms of inferiority to the Father; but which, when they occur, are always fairly explicable of His humanity; and imply that He was "equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father only respecting His manhood." This was the *principal* object of our Evangelist's Gospel; the *next* was, to supply some further particulars omitted by the three other inspired historians, who had gone before him. To undertake to select the peculiar beauties of this Gospel would be an endless task; but it is impossible not to remark, with what expressions

expressions of sympathetic tenderness, on Christ's approaching separation from His disciples, the chapters, immediately preceding the description of the last sad scene, abound. The intercession of our Blessed LORD in their behalf, as contained in the 17th chapter, is considered as one of the most affecting portions of the whole sacred volume.

From the consideration of the Gospel, let us pass to a review of those divine Epistles, in which the true nature of Christian charity is set forth in the strongest terms that can be conceived. The love of our neighbour, originating from our love of GOD, and from our sense of GOD's love towards us, is the prevailing subject: indeed it was the subject always uppermost in the mind of our Evangelist: his historians tell us, that when he was so enfeebled by old age, as to be unable to entertain his hearers

hearers with any long discourse, he contented himself with this single admonition, which he constantly repeated to his admiring flock, "Little children, love one another."

With respect to the Revelation communicated to this Apostle during his banishment in the island of Patmos, it may be sufficient to observe, that many great, sublime and mysterious truths are contained therein; many grand and important prophecies, some of which have already been fulfilled, some perhaps are in the moment of their accomplishment, whilst others are waiting for their completion "till the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and death and the grave shall deliver up the dead which are in them, and every one shall be judged according to his works."

You cannot but hear with wonder and concern, that one so holy, charitable, virtuous,

tuous, and good, should have been sentenced to a life of banishment from that society, which it was his study and endeavour to improve and adorn. But it pleased the good Providence of GOD to put the faith and constancy of His servant to its utmost trial. Having been represented to the cruel tyrant of that day as maintaining doctrines subversive of heathenism, he was sent for to Rome, and sentenced to be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil; but by the miraculous interposition of the same gracious Providence, which preserved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego from the flames of a fiery furnace, this faithful servant of GOD was rescued from what was intended, by the author of the cruel edict, to be his destruction.

And here be pleased to mark the great superiority of guilt and hardness of heart in the Emperor Domitian, beyond that of
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the Babylonian monarch. Struck with an awful sense of the almighty power of God, we hear the king of Babylon issuing a decree, that "every people, nation, and language, which should speak any thing amiss against the God which had delivered the three Hebrew captives, should be cut in pieces, and their houses should be made a dunghill; because," he added, "there is no other God, that can deliver after this sort." Not so affected was the obdurate heart of the Roman Emperor. Unconvinced by the astonishing miracle of St. John's deliverance, he orders him to be banished into an island, where "whether in the body, or out of the body, God knoweth," he saw visions of unutterable glory.

The edict of Domitian's successor permitted the return of St. John to Ephesus; where being full of days, and full of piety and

and virtue, he departed this life, at the age of about an hundred years.

In contemplating the character of St. *John* as the attendant on our Saviour, we behold him witnessing His glorious transfiguration on mount Tabor, and also His grievous sufferings on mount Calvary; and if we have the same love for Christ, which he had, we shall be ready to bear His cross, that we may be made partakers of His glory. Let those holy dispositions, which recommended this most amiable youth to the distinguished favour of his Blessed Master, be diligently cultivated by us, that we also may be the happy partakers of His love. Particularly let us pray for, and labour to excel in, that pre-eminent grace of Christian Charity, which was the most distinguished feature in the character which we have now been considering; and which is so frequently

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urged by our Saviour's particular command, and made the mark and badge of distinction of His disciples, even to the end of the world—*By this, says He, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another.* May it please God to pour this grace into our hearts; that from loving Him with pure affection here on earth, and loving our fellow-creatures for His sake, we may be exalted to that blissful state, wherein all, how different soever in glory, will be united in charity; and where the exercise of love and joy, and adoration and praise, will be the employment of the spirits of the just made perfect, to all eternity.

Now to GOD the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, Three Persons and One GOD, be all honour, and glory, and praise, henceforth and for evermore. AMEN.

**THE
HOLY INNOCENTS.**

DECEMBER 28.

311

HOLY INNOCENTS.

DECEMBER 28.

THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

JEREMIAH XXXI. 15.

*Thus saith the LORD: "A voice was heard
in Ramah; lamentation and bitter weep-
ing; Rachel, weeping for her children,
refused to be comforted for her children,
because they are not."*

THAT the words now recited were predictive of that very affecting transaction, the murder of the Holy Innocents, commemorated this day, the Evangelist St. Matthew has placed beyond all possibility of doubt. We are informed by the sacred historian of the malicious purposes

of Herod to destroy the Child Jesus. That jealous king, having heard that an enquiry had been made by certain wise men from the East concerning Him, whom they described as born King of the Jews, began to apprehend, that he was not secure in the possession of his own kingdom; that this Infant, whose birth occasioned so much wonder, as well as investigation, might possibly prove a dangerous and successful rival. He has therefore recourse first to crafty policy, and hypocritical pretences of devotion, in order to destroy Him: *Go, says he to the wise men, and search diligently for the young Child, and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also.* But how vain are the artifices of men, when opposed by the all-wise counsels of Heaven! The wise men are warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod with the wished-for information,

mation, but to provide for their personal security by *departing into their own country another way*. The rage and disappointment of this impious hypocrite were also guarded against, so far as our Blessed Saviour was concerned, by an admonition from Heaven to His parents, *to flee with the young Child into Egypt*; there to remain until the death of Herod, when that prophecy of Hosea would be accomplished, who had said, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*

The disobedience of the wise men in refusing to return was considered as an act of mockery and insult, and the affront was now no longer to be endured; the dreadful edict was sent forth, that all the children which were in *Bethlehem*, and in *all the coasts thereof*, *from two years old and under*, should be slain; Herod not doubting, that in this number the young King of the Jews

would be included, and himself be consequently more firmly seated on his throne. Then, saith St. Matthew, was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning; Rachel, weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

The very recital of the words cannot but excite our tenderest affection: *Rachel*, the representative of many thousand mothers, here described under all the pangs of disconsolate sorrow, cannot but move us most sensibly to pity and compassion: and we are almost inclined, in humble adoration of the wisdom of God, to ask, what had these Innocents done, for which they should so suddenly be cut off from the earth? But the answer is immediately ready at our hands: He, in whose power are the issues of life and death, hath at His disposal the

riches of glory, and happiness, and immortality; ready to be dispensed when He will, and to whom soever He will: and infinite surely was *their* gain, who were delivered from the miseries of a sinful world, and thus early invited to a participation of those enjoyments, which are reserved for the saints in heaven. As to these innocent Sufferers, therefore, let us not complain, that they were taken away from the evil to come, and called to the possession of so bright a crown, without a passage through that thorny path, which other saints have been constrained to walk in, before they could obtain it: how know we, that they were not, many of them, speedily taken away, lest *that wickedness should alter their understanding, or deceit should beguile their souls?*—It hath also been made a question, why it was judged expedient in the counsels of infinite

nite wisdom, that so many parents should be sentenced, by this harsh and merciless decree of Herod, to be involved in such deep, such heart-felt misery? To every such bold enquirer into the proceedings of all-seeing and unsearchable wisdom we may reply, "Thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this." Could not the same God, who suffered this device of the impious Herod to take place, cause such strong and lively impressions to be made on the minds of these parents of the infinite advantage of which their children were thus early partakers, as would be more than equivalent to their sorrow? A woman delivered from her pangs in childbirth, remembers no more her sufferings for *joy that her child is born into the world*: and strong is that hold, which God and nature have ordained, that our children should have on our affection. From the moment of their birth,

birth, they are the constant objects of our tenderness and attention: with delight we watch the early dawning of reason on their minds, and carefully cherish and fan the spark, till, by the blessing of God on our endeavours, it shines with increasing brightness, till it arrives at the meridian of what may be called human perfection. But, have we never heard of the disappointment of a parent's hopes? Have we never seen his fond expectations blasted by youthful impetuosity and sinful follies? And whilst, God be thanked, we have seen many a good and dutiful son the joy and comfort of his mother, have we never seen or heard a sorrowful Rachel, in bitterness lamenting rather that her children *are*, being such as they are, than that they are *not*. Hence I would argue, that these parents' loss of their children, whom they could not but consider as happily translated to a state of perfect

perfect bliss, might easily be rendered supportable, and even full of comfort, by reflections suggested by the same Divine Being, by whom the stroke was suffered to be given. It was hardly necessary to say thus much to vindicate the ways of Providence: it would better become us, on every difficult occasion, in all humility, to lay our hands upon our lips, and in silent adoration most firmly to believe, that "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and that most just are His judgments." It is in allusion to the blessed state of these Holy Innocents, that St. John, in his Book of Revelation, speaks of the spirits of persons pure and undefiled, which *follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*: These, says he, *were redeemed from among men, delivered from the dangers to which, had they lived, they would have been exposed, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb*: and

in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.

The event of this day has been considered, even from the earliest ages of Christianity, as worthy to be solemnly commemorated by the Church. These children, though incapable of any choice in the matter, are accepted as *martyrs*, inasmuch as they suffered for Christ, and glorified God by their deaths. One of the ancient fathers, speaking of the fate of these innocent sufferers, says of them, that by reason of their innocence they were worthy candidates for that crown, for which, by reason of their tender age, they were not able to strive. You may possibly have observed, that, in three successive days, we have *three* different kinds of martyrdom proposed for our consideration. In the character of the first martyr, St. Stephen, we see an illustrious saint suffering martyrdom in *will* and
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in *deed*: in the case of St. John the Evangelist, we behold an undaunted confessor, with his own perfect *will*, exposed to the flames of a burning cauldron; yet escaping unhurt, through the miraculous protection of an overruling Providence, and therefore a martyr only in the *will*, but not in *deed*: in these Holy Innocents we find no concurrence of the *will*, yet absolute martyrdom in *fact*; it having pleased God, says the pious writer of their history, to supply the defects of their *will*, by His own acceptance of the *deed*.

A few short reflections only now remain on the subject, this day presented to our consideration. And the first thing that strikes us is the exemplary punishment inflicted by God upon Herod, that monster of cruelty and iniquity, in consequence of whose most sanguinary decree, the tragical event which we now commemorate took place. The

Jewish

Jewish historian tells us, that when the shows were celebrating in honour of Cæsar, Herod came early in the morning into the theatre, dressed in a robe of silver, of most curious workmanship. The rays of the rising sun, reflected from so splendid a garb, gave him a majestic and awful appearance. They acknowledged him to be more than mortal, and called him a god: which impious flattery he neither rejected nor reproved. Immediately he was seized with an inward inflammation, which destroyed his vitals: he had a ravenous and unnatural appetite, which could not be satisfied: he had an ulcer in his bowels, attended with inexpressible pains: his limbs rotted, and were full of crawling worms: he had strong convulsions, which, having lasted five days, ended in his death. This was he, who accepted the flattering title of a God, and, for his pride, and unexampled cruelty, was
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thus humbled below the ordinary condition of a man.

Our second reflection shall be on the awful calamity, with which it pleased God to visit the parents of these martyred Innocents. It must not be forgotten, that they had refused to receive the Virgin Mary, when the hour of her sorrows was approaching; neither worshipping, nor even acknowledging our Saviour at His birth. The news of the shepherds, testifying their great joy; the arrival of the wise men from the East with their offerings of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, had no effect on their unbelieving minds; the awful visitation therefore which fell from heaven on the heads of the guilty parents strikes us with astonishment and awe; whilst the children themselves were crowned with the reward of martyrdom.

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Let us, thirdly, remember, that misfortunes are not always arguments of guilt. Our Saviour tells us, "that certain Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with his sacrifices, were not sinners above all the inhabitants of Galilee, because they suffered such things;" but from their fate a lesson was drawn of the necessity of repentance, as the means of avoiding destruction. Here we find innocent children made a sacrifice to the ambition of a cruel tyrant. The general inference is, that afflictions, instead of being the necessary signs of the divine displeasure, are frequently tokens of God's favour; and that many, like these children, have been indebted to their short and momentary sufferings, for an exceeding and eternal weight of glory *.

* "Salvete, flores martyrum,

"Grex immolatorum tener,

"Quos, lucis ipso in limine,

"Christi infecutor sustulit

"Sed turbo nascentes rosas."

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Lastly, we are taught, that, in order to be true disciples of Christ, we must become as *little children* in the disposition of our minds; in humility, and perfect submission to the will of GOD; in dependence upon His Providence in every temporal and spiritual danger; in contempt of the world, and in freedom from wayward and ambitious desires; in the practice of those virtues, which, whilst they enable us to adorn our profession, as members of the Christian Church militant here on earth, will best prepare us for the reception of that crown of glory, reserved for the members of the Church triumphant in heaven.

To which blessed state GOD of His mercy bring us all, through the merits of Him who died for the redemption of all, even JESUS CHRIST our LORD:

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, world without end. AMEN.

THE
CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

JANUARY 1.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

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NEW YEAR DAY

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THE
CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

ROMANS II. 29.

*Circumcision is of the heart; in the spirit,
and not in the letter; whose praise is not
of men, but of God.*

THE new year opens with the commemoration of our Saviour's first instance of suffering for the purpose of fulfilling all righteousness. If the necessity of circumcision in general was founded on the impurity contracted at our birth by reason of original sin, no such necessity existed in the particular case of our Blessed Saviour; because He was born without the

least spot or blemish of sin. But much more was intended by that ordinance: it was intended, that every son of Abraham should bear in his body a mark of distinction from all other people; a seal of his inheritance of the land of promise; a token of his profession, as the servant of the only true God, the Creator of heaven and earth—it was, *an outward visible sign*, the intent whereof was constantly to remind him of his duty; and to animate his endeavours after that *invisible grace* of which it was the seal; which should enable him so to walk as to please God, and to become an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. By this rite of the Jewish law, the people of God were received into covenant with Him, as Christians are received by Baptism. Having been first enjoined to Abraham, and continued by him to his descendants, it was, after a suspension du-

ring their journey through the wilderness, renewed by Jofhua, on the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan. To this ordinance, (which, as a seal and token of distinction, was enjoined under the severest penalty, namely, that he who neglected it should be cut off from God's people,) our Saviour condescended to submit; to shew that He, who was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, came not to destroy the law, until it should be no longer necessary, through the introduction of a better covenant. On the establishment of Christianity, the distinction betwixt the children of Abraham and others no longer subsisted; the wall of partition betwixt Jew and Gentile was thrown down, an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan was the object of the Christian's hope; and God declared Himself to be no respecter of persons; but that in every nation and country,

he that feared Him, and worked righteousness, would be accepted by Him. To the believing Jew, this ordinance had certainly a spiritual signification; and he was taught by it to lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, to put off the body of the sins of the flesh, and to mortify those sensual appetites, which captivate, defile, and destroy the soul.

In compliance with the original institution as to every particular, the Child Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day; at which time He received that name, which was to signify the purpose of His coming into the world, the name of Jesus, a SAVIOUR: this name was given Him by the Angel, before He was conceived in the womb, and declared to be therefore given Him, because He should SAVE His people from their sins.

Under

Under the Christian dispensation, the Sacrament of Baptism is to be considered in the same degree of estimation and authority, wherein Circumcision was holden by the Jews. The Jewish infant by that ordinance became a debtor to observe the whole law of Moses. By Baptism, the Christian child is made a member of Christ, and engaged to observe the laws of the gospel-institution. And let it be remembered, as a full vindication of Infant-Baptism, that *children*, under both the Jewish and Christian dispensation, have always been considered as capable of entering into covenant with God. Under both, the introductory ordinance was made the indispensable condition of obtaining the Divine blessing: under the law, "the uncircumcised soul shall be cut off from the people" of God; under the Gospel, "except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot

cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

On what arguments the neglect of this Sacrament is founded, it is not my present business to enquire: I am much more disposed to express my thankfulness, and to excite the same inclination in my hearers, that it hath pleased God to point out to us the means, whereby the stains of original sin may early be washed away; and whereby the baptized infant of a believing parent may be made a child of grace, a member of Christ's Church, and an inheritor of the kingdom of God.

St. Paul, in the words prefixed to this discourse, and in several verses preceding them, addresses himself, in very pointed language, to the Jew, resting altogether on the outward privilege of his profession; and even supposing, that his adherence to the *circumstantials* of his religion, would justify his total neglect of the *essentials* of

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it. And I could earnestly wish that when the *Christian* hears this passage recited, he would only substitute in his mind the word *Christian* instead of *Jew*; and the word *Baptism* in the room of *Circumcision*: he will then feel himself very forcibly addressed, and may gather much admirable instruction from the Apostle's argument.

Behold, says he, thou art called a Jew; and restand in the Law, and makest thy boast of God; even as many formal professors of Christianity rest in the outward benefits of the Gospel, and boast of the mercies of the Christian Redemption; and knowest His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law; even as too many Christians, who are well instructed, and know their duty, and approve, without obeying, the Law of God; learn thou, that Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the Law; as Baptism is

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of infinite advantage, if we obey the Gospel: but if the Jew be a wilful transgressor of the Law, and the Christian wilfully disobey the Gospel, the Circumcision of the one is made Uncircumcision, and the Baptism of the other is, as to any spiritual advantage, no Baptism at all. For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; nor is that Baptism, which is merely the putting away the filth of the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and he a Christian, who, besides his Baptism, hath the answer of a good conscience towards God. And as Circumcision to the Jew was that of the heart, so must Baptism be an effectual regeneration; a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

That this doctrine was perfectly understood by the divine Lawgiver, Moses, may

be clearly inferred from his exhortation to the Jews in the Book of Deuteronomy:

“ And now, Israel, what doth the LORD

“ thy GOD require of thee, but to fear the

“ LORD thy GOD, to walk in all His ways,

“ and to love Him, and to serve the LORD

“ thy GOD with all thy heart, and with

“ all thy soul? Circumcise therefore the

“ foreskin of thine heart, and be no more

“ stiffnecked.” This is manifestly an ad-

monition to *spiritual* Circumcision: and it

implies that real dedication of the soul to

GOD, which Christian Baptism is designed

not only to signify, but to effect in us:

“ always remembering,” faith our Liturgy

in the appropriated Service, “ that Bap-

tism doth represent unto us our profession;

which is, to follow the example of our

Saviour Christ, and be made like unto

Him: that as He died and rose again for

us, so should we, who are baptized, die

from

from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living." This is one of the lessons which this day's festival is peculiarly designed to teach us; and the prayer which is appointed for our use directs us to implore "the true Circumcision of the Spirit;" the effect of which will be, "that our hearts and all our members will be mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, and we shall in all things obey the blessed will of God."

Another lesson which this festival is designed to teach us, is that of *Humility*. The holy, harmless, spotless Son of God submits Himself to an ordinance which implied in its original institution some previous contraction of sin; and in so doing, He, whose errand upon earth was to fulfil the will of God, vouchsafes to take upon Himself

Himself not only the form of a servant, but even the character of a sinner.

We are, lastly, instructed, by this day's solemnity, in the true nature of spiritual Circumcision; which includes a strict government of our sensual appetites, a total abstinence from unlawful pleasures, and a moderate enjoyment of such as are lawful and allowed; the due regulation of our will and affections, which are to be raised from earth to heaven; and an earnest desire to know our duty, accompanied with a sincere disposition to perform it.

All this, we well know, must be effected in us by the power of that grace, which it is our duty constantly to implore: and never can we more properly enter upon serious resolutions of advancement in Christian virtue, than on our entrance on a new year; a review of that which is past may possibly convince us of the necessity of
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arming ourselves against those temptations, which the approaching year may bring with it: and the obvious prayer on the occasion is, that it would please God to “teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”—that the time past of our lives may suffice us to have walked in error and disobedience—that if we have done iniquity, we may do so no more. For surely, if ever there is a period, when we are *compelled* to reflect—when serious and awakening thoughts must of *necessity* arise in the soul, it is on the return of this day; which warns us, that we are (by a whole revolution of the earth we tread on round the sun) nearer to our latter end—that time flies swiftly away, and that eternity is closely pursuing its steps—that we are decidedly advanced another full stage of our journey—that whether we are young or old, whether we are in health or

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in sickness, we shall do well to prepare ourselves for that mysterious exchange, which sooner or later awaits us all—that the present hours are precious indeed, inasmuch as on the right employment of these depends all our happiness in that unseen world, whereinto the mighty Conqueror of Death and the Grave is in His own person entered—who only hath immortality—who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day—whose NAME* is above every name in heaven and on earth; that NAME, in which is implied our deliverance from the power and dominion of sin in this life, and from eternal punishment in the next.

* The name Jesus [יֵשׁוּעַ] signifies not merely a Saviour; but “God the Saviour”—thus not only alluding to the Divinity of Christ, but verifying Isaiah’s prophecy, (Ch. vii. 14.) and the Angel’s prediction, Matt. i. 21, 22, 23.

At this Name every knee is required to bow, every testimony of reverence is to be shewn: on the all-prevailing merits and sufficiency of this saving Name the penitent sinner securely rests for pardon and peace, for justification and acceptance, for grace and glory.

Now to God the FATHER, &c.

* The name Jesus [Christ] signifies not merely a saviour; but "God the saviour,"—thus not only alluding to the Divinity of Christ, but verifying Isaiah's prophecy, (Ch. vii. 14), and the Angel's prediction, (Mat. i. 21, 22, 23).

**THE
EPIPHANY;**

OR,

MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST

TO THE

GENTILES.

JANUARY 6.

THE
 EPIPHANY
 EPIPHANY
 JOHN III. 8
 MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST
 manifested, that He might deliver the world
 of the devil. TO THE

THE GOSPEL, said the Day
 which is a Greek word, and
 signifies Manifestation, calls upon us to ce-
 lebrate that great mystery of godliness,
 God manifest in the flesh: and in this re-
 spect it is of the same import and mean-
 ing with that high festival of our Blessed
 Saviour's Birth, from which this is the
 twelfth day: that feast being celebrated
 twelve days, and it having been always
 customary

THE
EPIPHANY.

I JOHN III. 8.

For this purpose the Son of GOD was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil,

THE present festival, called the *Epiphany*, which is a Greek word, and signifies *Manifestation*, calls upon us to celebrate that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh: and in this respect it is of the same import and meaning with that high festival of our Blessed Saviour's Birth, from which this is the twelfth day: that feast being celebrated twelve days, and it having been always

customary among the Jews to observe the first and last days of their feasts with more than ordinary solemnity; this, as the last, was distinguished with particular respect, and marked with a particular token of divine mercy and favour. The communication of heavenly truth to a people sunk in the depths of ignorance, and overwhelmed with most deplorable blindness, is such a mercy as calls forth every acknowledgement, especially from us, who are so particularly benefited by it. We are the descendants of those, who were themselves delivered from the state just mentioned, by the labours of the first preachers of the Gospel in this our island. Unto us, of the Gentile world, as well as to the people of the Jews, a Child is born, unto us, as well as unto them, a Son is given; even as God had promised by His holy Prophet, when He said, *I will give thee*

thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my Salvation unto the ends of the earth. The holy Simeon, with the Child Jesus in his arms, acknowledges Him to have been given not less for a Light to lighten the *Gentiles*, than He had been, for ages and generations past, the Glory of God's people Israel.

How the knowledge of this great mercy was communicated to the world, the Scriptures appointed for this solemnity most fully declare. We are told, that a star of no ordinary appearance was discovered by certain wise men of the country of Chaldæa, who were not only famous for various kinds of learning, but were particularly celebrated for their skill in the science of astronomy. A luminous body of this nature would excite no inconsiderable degree of investigation and enquiry among those ingenious persons, whose studies were more

immediately directed to the phenomena in the heavens. That this star, as a new and prodigious object, presaged to their inquisitive and awakened minds some extraordinary event of importance to the world, we cannot entertain the least doubt: they determine to pursue its course; and St. Matthew tells us, that "it went before them, till it came to the place where the young child was laid." They might not improbably be led on by an opinion prevalent among the Gentiles, that infants, born at the time of the appearance of a new star*,

* The Jews, as well as the other inhabitants of the Roman Empire, were probably well acquainted with the rumour spread abroad in compliment to Augustus, that at the funeral solemnities of Julius Cæsar, a *new star* had shone for seven successive nights—Vid. Sueton. This comet (for such it was) is noticed by Virgil, *Geo.* 1. 488—and possibly *Ecl.* 9. 47.

"Ecce Dionæi processit Cæsaris ASTRUM;" though on this subject commentators are much divided in their sentiments.

were

were likely to make a conspicuous figure in the world. But the most probable opinion seems to be, that this might be the glorious light which shone from heaven upon the Bethlehem shepherds, when the Angels imparted to them the tidings of our Saviour's birth. This light might assume the appearance of an extraordinary star, and produce the effect of which we are informed, on the minds of the sages. The world, it is well known, was, at the time of our Saviour's appearance, under the general expectation of an universal Monarch. The Prophets had foretold, that a person should come, towards whom the desire of all nations should be directed: and the Jews now more particularly looked for the Messiah; this being the time in which the prophecies concerning His advent were to be accomplished; and in which they were actually fulfilled, though a veil was before their eyes,

eyes, that they could not see, and darkness overwhelmed their hearts, that they could not understand, that this was indeed the promised Redeemer; that this was indeed the Great Prophet that should come into the world. The very terms in which these wise men make their enquiry shew, that they had had some divine notices concerning the great event of the Messiah's birth. They ask, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? "for," say they, "we have seen *His* star in the East, and are come to worship Him." They could not know from any intelligence that their science could afford them that this star was *His* star, or that it pointed to the birth-place of the King of the Jews. By its direction, however, we find them at *Bethlehem Ephrata*; and we may conjecture with what wonder and astonishment their minds must be filled, when they beheld this long sought

King,

King, in all the humility of a most obscure condition, with no one circumstance of pomp or pageantry around Him. Yet was their faith unshaken, and their devotion unabated: the nature of their offerings, according to universal interpretation, bespoke their sentiments concerning the object of their adoration: they presented to Him gifts, *gold, and frankincense, and myrrh*; which not only were some of the most valuable productions of their own country, but had also a peculiar relation to His situation and character: they offered Him *gold*, as to a *king*; *myrrh*, as to a *man of sorrows*; and *incense*, as to a *GOD*. They from this moment embraced the faith, and instead of returning to carry the news of their discovery to the impious and malicious Herod, being admonished of his treachery from above, they departed into their own country another way; where,

as historians inform us, the spark thus kindled was fanned afterwards into a flame by the labours of the Apostle St. Thomas, who baptized many of their countrymen, and employed them as his assistants in the promulgation of the Gospel.

How and by what means the light of Divine Truth has long been obscured and mixed with a thick cloud of error in their descendants of the Indian nations, we may lament, but it is not our present business to enquire. Let us rather turn our thoughts with gratitude towards the extension of Divine Mercy to this land of our nativity; and recollect what changes the page of history informs us the introduction of the Gospel of Christ wrought on our forefathers, and through His never-ceasing mercy still worketh in the minds of those, who embrace, believe, and obey that Gospel, which was in the earliest ages delivered to

the inhabitants of this island. Before the reception of Christianity amongst us, it is well known that this now enlightened, and highly privileged country of our's, upon which the Gospel is shining with meridian brightness, was exactly such in a spiritual sense as holy Job in a natural sense describes the dreary mansions of the dead: "It was a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light was as darkness." Fierce in its manners, revengeful in its resentments, unbridled in its appetites, cruel and unnatural in its sacrificial rites and ceremonies, it stood in the utmost need of that Religion, whose fundamental principles are the very reverse of those, which influenced the minds of our forefathers. To their ferocity, she opposed the graces of meekness and charity; to their inclementcy, she opposed mercy and benevolence;

violence; to their impurity, she opposed the ornaments of chastity and virtuous sobriety; to their abominable idolatries, she opposed the purity of a true faith in our only LORD God and Saviour the LORD Jesus Christ; to their pride and self-confidence, she opposed the all-sufficiency of Divine Grace, and pointed out the only effectual means of obtaining it: to their ignorant, unlettered minds, she opened by degrees the sacred volume; thence she informed them of the perfection in which mankind was originally created, in righteousness and true holiness: she shewed them by what artifice of the great adversary of our souls, sin, and misery, and death, were introduced into the world: she set before them the ravages made by sin, even to the utter destruction of the whole human race, one holy family alone excepted. She explained to them the gracious interference of Heaven

in the different ages of the world, in behalf of the peculiar people of God; and shewed how that "God having at sundry times and in divers manners spoken to our fathers by the Prophets, spake unto us in the last days, when the fulness of time was come, by His Blessed Son:" Him she revealed to them as the eternal and only Son of God, equal to the Father in glory, majesty, power, and eternity; condescending to leave the realms of heavenly bliss, to clothe Himself with our nature, to come down to this lower world, to live and to die for fallen man! She described Him to them under every character that could inspire their love: as the very essence of purity, meekness, gentleness, humility, temperance, and charity; and as not only possessing Himself those virtues in the highest perfection, but as both able and willing to communicate them to all, that

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would

would hearken to her voice, and listen to the precepts contained in the Gospel which she proposed to their acceptance. Many, (blessed be GOD,) listened attentively to her voice; they received the truth with gladness; and the fruits produced on their minds and conduct were such, as Christianity only could produce: they were gradually renewed in the spirit of their minds; they cast off the impurities of the Old Man, the first Adam, and they put on the New Man, the sanctified nature of Christ Jesus, "which after GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness."

That we have numberless instances in this enlightened country of persons, who appear to "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," whilst it cannot but fill us with the deepest concern, must not lead us to undervalue the inestimable blessing of the introduction of the

Christian

Christian faith amongst us. Let our gratitude for those mercies, whereby, (if it be not our own fault,) the power of the devil is destroyed, and his dominion is overthrown, ever induce us “to walk in the light as children of the light, and to have no fellowship with the works of darkness;” lest those nations, upon which the Gospel hath either not yet shined, or shines with diminished lustre, should rise in judgment against us: they daily attend their places of worship, perform many ceremonies, and offer their accustomed vows: others pursue long and painful journies to go through their stated prayers and ablutions: others never suffer their sacred fire to be extinguished, or the service of their temple to be neglected; they fast and pray, they use many penances and tedious ceremonies, such as we are taught to believe our gracious LORD and Master requireth not at our hands. Yet let

it not be thought that *nothing* is required of us. "To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly and devoutly with our God," are duties of perpetual and indispensable necessity: to believe the Gospel which He taught, and to abound in the graces which He prescribed and exemplified; to think, and speak, and act, as persons redeemed by Divine Mercy, and continually strengthened by Divine Grace, this, this is the best return for His goodness whose Gospel brought salvation to the world, and who hath, by His all-sufficient merits, opened the kingdom of Heaven to all that believe and obey it.

Now to GOD the FATHER, the SON,
and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour, and
glory, and praise, henceforth and for ever-
more. AMEN.

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

THE

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL,

JANUARY 25.

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Acts IX. 15.

He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel,

WE need not read the context, in order to know that the great Apostle St. Paul is here spoken of, whose Conversion, as a singular instance of Divine Mercy not only towards himself, but towards the whole Church of Christ in all ages of the world, is particularly recommended this day to our consideration. We

celebrate other saints by a grateful commemoration of that power of Divine Grace, whereby they were enabled to seal their testimony with their blood; with one only exception, that of St. John the Baptist, whose *Nativity* is recorded, as being, like the *Conversion* of St. Paul, an amazing instance of the miraculous power of God*. The extent of his commission is set forth in the words of the text: where he is de-

* "This Festival of St. Paul, was formerly not reckoned among the holidays observed by the Reformed Church of England—yet Services were appointed to be celebrated in the Church on that day, and an especial Collect with an Epistle and Gospel, set down in the Book of Common Prayer for that Festival. But since the Restoration of King Charles II. viz. in the 14th year of his reign, Anno Dom. 1662, this Festival (with that of St. Barnabas) are required to be celebrated as Holidays by the Act of Uniformity, which establishes the Book of Common Prayer, as now used with all its additions and alterations." SEYMOUR.

In the Romish Church the 29th day of June is termed the *Passion*, and the 30th of the same month the *Commemoration* of St. Paul.

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scribed to have been selected by the mercy of God, to bear witness to that Gospel, which before he had persecuted, and to diffuse the knowledge of its truths throughout the world. The circumstances attendant on his Conversion are fully declared in the Acts of the holy Apostles, in the ninth, twenty-second, and twenty-sixth chapters. From his general history it appears, that he had advantages of human learning, superior to most of those whom our Saviour selected, when on earth, to be the witnesses of His miracles, and the attendants on His person. He tells us, he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, who was a celebrated teacher and interpreter of the Jewish law. The time not dedicated to study was employed, it seems, in an honest, useful occupation, according to a well known principle among the Jews, "that he who taught not his son a trade,

“taught him to be a thief:” and a subsequent part of the Apostle’s history shews us, that this prudent mode of education served to preserve him in a state of independence on the bounty of others. In his history of himself he informs us, that he was educated in the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, that of the Pharisees: that he imbibed their principles from his tender years, his father having been attached to the same sect*. It appears, that he was of a warm, active, zealous spirit, which rendered him violent in his opposition to whatever sentiments were in any degree derogatory from the honour of the Mosaic institution; an instance of which he clearly manifested, when at an early period of life he was consenting to, if not actually assisting in,

* This is clearly intimated in his appeal to the Pharisees, Acts xxiii. 6. “Men and brethren, I am
“a Pharisee, *the Son of a Pharisee!*”

the death of the first martyr, St. Stephen; thus becoming at once a sharer in the guilt of that tragical deed, as well as a partaker of the benefit of that illustrious sufferer's intercession for his murderers. From one degree of fierce, but well-intentioned, zeal to another, we find this youth proceeding; breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples at Jerusalem; making havock of the Church; and at length, armed with a commission from the Jewish sanhedrim to bring in chains to Jerusalem such as he should find professing Christianity at Damascus. Here we have an opportunity afforded us of viewing the mischievous tendency of that zeal, which is rather influenced by passion, than tempered, matured, and regulated by sound wisdom and due information: it is good to be zealously affected, but it must be in a cause that is manifestly good, and our zeal must never transgress

transgress the bounds of discretion and charity.

It pleased God in mercy to those who would have been the sufferers from this furious zealot at Damascus, as well as in mercy to St. Paul himself, that he should be arrested by the way in a most extraordinary manner: it cannot be so well described in any other terms, as in his own narrative before Agrippa: "*As I went to Damascus*, says he, *with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I said, Who art thou, LORD? And He said, I am Jesus,*"

whom

"whom thou persecutest: but rise, and stand
 "upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto
 "thee for this purpose, to make thee a mi-
 "nister, and a witness both of those things
 "which thou hast seen, and of those things
 "in which I will appear unto thee; deli-
 "vering thee from the people, and from the
 "Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To
 "open their eyes, and to turn them from
 "darkness to light, and from the power of
 "Satan unto GOD; that they may receive
 "forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among
 "them which are sanctified by faith that is
 "in me." This is the Apostle's own ac-
 count of that wonderful interposition of
 Divine Providence, by which he was him-
 self delivered from error, and made a great
 instrument in the conversion of the Gen-
 tile world. It seemed right in the coun-
 sels of Divine Wisdom, that he, who was
 to be such a distinguished teacher of righ-
 teousness

teousness to others, should himself be a remarkable instance of the power of Divine Grace, and of God's readiness to receive even the bitterest adversaries of His truth, upon their sincere repentance: *For this cause*, he saith of himself, *I obtained mercy; that in me, first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.* God had mercy upon him, because what he had done, in opposition to the Gospel and its professors, was done ignorantly, in unbelief; with an honest mind, but with a blind, impetuous zeal, in opposition to doctrines which he thought calculated to destroy, instead of fulfilling, the Law of Moses.

Behold now the same active spirit exerted in a far better cause, and listen to the Apostle from this time preaching that very Jesus, whom he had blasphemed and persecuted;

persecuted; acting in conformity to the precept given by our Saviour to St. Peter, "*Thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*" Henceforth is he seen preaching the truths of the Gospel, even in that very city, wherein it had been his purpose to vilify them, and to drag the professors of them to prison and to death: exposing himself to those very dangers, in which he had heretofore been endeavouring to involve others. With an ardour, which no difficulties could discourage, he extended his labours through the whole Roman Empire, and even to the utmost bounds of the western world: from which we are led to conclude, that this fortunate island, in which we dwell, partook of the benefits of this Apostle's evangelical labour. That a Christian Church was planted in Britain, during the time of the Apostles, is generally asserted and believed. One histo-
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rian in particular declares, " that St. Paul brought salvation to the islands that lie in the ocean;" another, " that he preached the Gospel in the Western parts:" an act of providential mercy towards us, which they will most sensibly feel, and for which they will be most truly thankful, who have the most lively sense of the privileges and blessings which Christianity bestows on all that embrace her doctrines and observe her precepts: for *she is indeed a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things we can desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days, as well as happiness, while they last, is in her right hand; and in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

If this, and a thousand times more, can with truth be said in favour of the Gospel,

how

how can we ever, with sufficient gratitude, acknowledge *His* goodness, who hath been pleased to impart to us such an inestimable blessing! who in His mercy first enabled the Apostle of this day to perceive, and know, and understand its excellence; and then inspired him with ability and zeal to communicate its saving doctrines to the world; whereby we of this land have been so eminently rescued from darkness, ignorance, and error, and called to the light, and knowledge, and profession of the truth.

O may our conduct be in some degree suited to our distinguished mercies! and may we walk in the light, which will conduct us to the land of everlasting life, through the merits of Him, whose appropriate character it is, that He is *The Way, the Truth, and the Life!*

The best improvement of this day's festival will be, an earnest attention to those

those divine writings, which this eminent Apostle hath left for the direction of Christians, in every particular of their lives: you cannot place a man in any situation, wherein he will not be able to collect, from this invaluable repository, the best possible means of directing his conduct. It is true, as St. Peter observes, that "there are in his writings some things hard to be understood;" some things liable to be mistaken and perverted: but they contain "milk for babes," elementary principles for the unlearned; "as well as meat for strong men," instructions of deeper import, and adapted to the capacities of such as are more firmly established in the knowledge of the truth: they are all to be received with humility, if we mean to profit by them; and being so received, they are calculated to edify and build us up in the true knowledge and
love

love of God, and in a perfect obedience to His commandments.

The Conversion of this Apostle from being a blasphemer and a persecutor, to be the most zealous and indefatigable preacher of the Gospel, may encourage those who have been enemies to Religion in word or deed, to hope for acceptance, if they turn to Him from whom they have deeply revolted, and, trusting to His all-sufficient merits for pardon, sincerely renounce their error, and embrace the truth. And let the zeal and endeavours of every penitent sinner to repair the miscarriages of his past life be, like *St. Paul's*, proportionate to the backwardness, which he hath heretofore shewn to comply with the precepts of the Gospel, and to follow the example of its Divine Author. We see that Christ, though received up into glory, doth still graciously patronize His servants on earth.

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still condescends to interest Himself in their behalf. Most true was that gracious promise, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Actuated by this divine sympathy towards his afflicted members, he declares that whoever persecutes them, persecutes Himself—a circumstance which should tend to comfort suffering virtue, and (if any thing could have that effect) cause to cease the fury of the oppressor, the blasphemy of the profane person, and even the idle jest of the scornful—lest in opposing a feeble mortal like themselves, they should haply be found to have entered the lists against God.

The grace, so miraculously bestowed on this blessed Saint, hath awakened, in the minds of some distinguished characters, such a sense of the almighty power of Divine Truth, as induced them readily to

embrace

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embrace it, from an unfeigned admiration of its excellence, after a long and confirmed opposition to it. The voice spake unto them from Heaven as to the illustrious Apostle, and, like him, not disobedient to the heavenly admonition, they stood forward in defence of the faith concerning which they once doubted, strenuous assertors of the true religion, and champions of Jesus Christ. May the same grace of God incline and excite us to a steadfast perseverance in our duty, upon whom the light of the Gospel hath shined, and is now shining, in all its brightness; and may it lead us from one degree of Christian holiness and virtue to another; till having, with this great Apostle, "fought a good fight, and finished our course, and kept the faith," we are invigorated, through the mercy of God and the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the acceptance of that "crown of righteousness,

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto all those that look for His appearing," with an humble but confident hope of pardon, acceptance, and salvation, through His merits, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and who hath opened the kingdom of Heaven for the reception of every penitent and returning sinner.

Now to GOD the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, Three Persons and One GOD, be all honour, and glory, and praise, henceforth and for evermore. AMEN.

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PURIFICATION;

OR,

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

IN THE

TEMPLE.

FEBRUARY 2.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

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PURIFICATION;

OR,

**THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST
IN THE TEMPLE.****St. LUKE II. 22.**

And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

HOW fully verified was that declaration of our Blessed Saviour, even from His earliest infancy, that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it! "Thus," says He, at his Baptism, "Thus

it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,"
That there was no impurity in the birth
of the Child Jesus, will readily be admitted by all who believe the gospel-history : yet inasmuch as His holy Mother was not exempted, in the general opinion, from the ordinary circumstances of other women, a compliance with the outward obligations of the Mosaic law was judged reasonable, expedient, and proper : we behold therefore the LORD and Saviour of the world presented in the Temple, and both Himself and His Mother expressing, in this act, great humility, obedience, and reverence to the public functions of the Jewish law. The humble Parent of our Saviour claims no exemption from a strict observance of the legal rites, in consideration of the peculiar circumstances of her case ; we behold her approaching, not with a lamb, the oblation
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of the rich, but with the offering of the poor, which was a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; these were to be delivered to the priest, that he might offer them before the LORD, and make an atonement for her, that she might be purified.

He, who came into the world to save and redeem us, did, from His birth to His cross, fulfil all righteousness. He came to exhibit, as man, a perfect and sinless obedience to all those laws which, as God, He had revealed to mankind. Accordingly we find Him in His earliest infancy, meekly submitting to all the ordinances of the established religion—received, though without spot of sin, into the covenant of Grace—and presented to God in the Temple according to the custom prescribed by the law of Moses, on the day when His holy Mother offered up the oblations of the poor.

What

What an instructive lesson is afforded to mankind, if they would but open their eyes to the truth, of the importance of the *external* acts of religious worship, and of the reverence due to the service of God! How weak, how frivolous are those evasions by means of which a self-deceiving conscience is reconciled to the habitual disregard of those acts of *public devotion*, which have the sanction of divine authority, and to which a peculiar blessing is promised from above! He who was a sacrifice for sin, was also an example of godly life—an example, which it is our bounden duty to imitate, as far as the infirmities of our nature will admit. To equal His sinless perfection is a privilege not to be attained by mortals—here our weakness has every thing to expect from His abundant mercy—but the means of grace are in our power; and if we wilfully and deliberately neglect these, how

What

how can we without presumption encourage the hope of glory?

The Jewish law of purification is at an end—but the better dispensation of the Gospel hath pointed out a corresponding ordinance under the new Covenant—and the devotion and gratitude which fill the heart of a Christian matron after her deliverance from pain and danger, will find expressions in that most excellent form of thanksgiving, which the compilers of our Liturgy have appropriated to this solemn purpose; when in the house of God, and in the presence of the congregation, (for thus only can it be used with propriety, or even common consistency*,) the handmaid

* An injunction is added in our Common Prayer Book, too seldom, alas! regarded by those who have thus been objects of the Divine Mercy, viz. that every woman should receive the *Holy Communion* as soon as an opportunity shall be afforded her, of giving this solemn testimony of her gratitude. [*See the Rubric at the end of the Service used at the Churching of Women.*]

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of the LORD blesses that mercy which shewed itself in her preservation, and, because her *prayers* were heard, offers up the tribute of her *praises*.

We are here to observe, that by this act of humiliation on the part of the Blessed Virgin, and this condescension to the injunctions of the law on the part of our Saviour, an opportunity was given for a public declaration of the purposes for which the Messiah appeared among men, from the mouth of the venerable SIMEON, and of ANNA the prophetess; the former of whom, taking the Child into his arms, blessed God in that hymn, which makes a part of our daily Evening Service; whilst the latter, coming in at the same instant, gave thanks unto the LORD, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. To the holy Simeon it had been revealed, that "he should not

see death before he had seen the Lord Christ :” and, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was, at this moment, brought to the Temple, when Christ was presented: with rapturous delight he exclaims, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” In this song of praise the wonderful salvation of God, manifested both to Jew and Gentile, is gratefully acknowledged; and the holy Child Jesus publicly declared to be the Author of that salvation. We here behold the last moments of a faithful servant of God cheered and illumined by a clear view of that Great Salvation, which is the grand object of our faith and hope: and with no inconsiderable satisfaction do we reflect,

reflect, that the same consolation may support and refresh us in our latest moments, if we consider the same Saviour, as presented to our faith in the holy Scriptures: then, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, this reflection will be our comfort and support; that He who is our light and our salvation, will also be the strength of our life, our refuge in the hour of death, and our crown of rejoicing in the day of judgment. We, who have known Him now by faith, shall after this life have the fruition of His glorious Godhead—we shall see Him again, and our hearts shall rejoice, and never shall that joy be taken away from us.

Think not, then, ye who, in the days of youth and indiscretion, forget your God, think not that ye can ever die in peace, until ye have embraced your Saviour with your understanding and affections; till you un-

feignedly believe what in His Gospel He hath revealed; and till you sincerely practise the duties which He taught: O may ye be wise in good time, and remember your latter end; yea, so remember it, as to be assured, that there is no foundation of hope in that hour, when we shall stand in greatest need of support, but that which is laid on the retrospect of a well-spent life; on the recollection, that, according to the frailty and imperfection of our nature, we have performed, or have sincerely endeavoured to perform, those conditions, upon which salvation is promised to the children of men.

Permit me now to remark the situation, in which these faithful servants of God were found, when the Child Jesus was presented in the Temple: they were in the public assembly of worshippers, looking for redemption in Jerusalem: and the

singular

singular blessing and honour here vouchsafed to them may encourage Christians constantly and devoutly to attend on those ordinances of religion, at which Christ hath declared Himself to be at all times more immediately present: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Under such a gracious promise and assurance, let nothing induce us to neglect those means, which God hath established for building us up in our most holy faith. He who wilfully absents himself from the public ordinances of religion has never considered how great a privilege he despises, nor of how great advantages he deprives himself. Is it a *joyful* and *pleasant* thing to be thankful? Hither then are we invited, to offer our praises unto God for all the benefits which we have received at His hands. Is it not a great *privilege*, that the holy Scriptures

THE PURIFICATION.

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ptures are open to us for our instruction in righteousness? Hither then are we invited, to hear God's most holy Word. Is it not a most encouraging *promise*, that whatsoever we ask the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, He will infallibly give us, as far as it shall be most conducive to our real benefit? Hither then are we invited to come, that, under this gracious assurance, we may ask those things, which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.

The leading virtues recommended to our imitation by this day's festival, are, first, Humility; particularly shewn in that obedience to established institutions here exemplified in the character and conduct of the Child JESUS, and his holy Mother. Of this virtue the whole life of our Blessed Saviour was one uniform and constant example; who, though He was rich, be-

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yond all possible estimation of riches, and greatness, and honour, yet, for our sakes, became poor; He humbled Himself, and became of no reputation; that we, through His poverty, might be rich; through His abasement might be exalted; through His submission even unto death, might live and reign in glory for ever.

The second virtue here prescribed, is Purity, both of body and soul. The Virgin Mary's conformity to the law respecting outward purification, inculcates a lesson of that inward purity, which the Gospel requires of every professor, and to which the greatest of all possible blessings is promised; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:" in which privilege is included the consummation of all happiness; for "in His presence," whom we shall be permitted to behold, "is the fulness of joy." If we purify ourselves even

as He is pure, then shall we, when He appeareth again with power and great glory, be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom.

A third duty recommended by the example of the Child Jesus presented in the Temple, is the early dedication of those, whose spiritual and eternal welfare is most dear to us, to the service and worship of God. The impressions of piety cannot be too soon received, nor can children too soon be made sensible of the situation wherein they stand, respecting their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The tree, planted at first in an honourable soil, will be fittest for the Paradise of God. It taketh root unto life eternal; its branches are the branches of honour and grace, and it bringeth forth its fruit in due season. The prime of our age, the vigour of our days, the excellence of our strength, and the flower of

our youth, are the best and fittest offering to be made unto Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; and on whose mercy we depend for our happiness in this life, and our hopes of glory in the world to come. The miserable oblation of the dregs of a life worn out in habits of sin, is not likely to meet with a favourable acceptance in His sight, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. I do not mean, that repentance, even at the eleventh hour of the day, is absolutely to be despaired of; but I do mean to say, that it is the extreme of presumption to sin now, that grace may abound hereafter; and to trust to the uncertain contingency of a future hour, which never may arrive, for the accomplishment of the mighty work of our salvation.

Lastly, we are here directed, when we see the lowly Jesus and his humble Parent

contenting themselves with the offering required of the poor, not to look down with contempt on the condition of those, from whom the all-wise Providence of God hath thought fit to withhold the accommodations and comforts of the present life. We want no evidence that God often chuseth the poor in this world to be His servants, if they are rich in faith, and heirs of the promise which He hath made to them that love Him: that He is no respecter of persons, but that, in every station of life, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him. Let us not therefore estimate merit by the portion of affluence allotted to any one here on earth, but let us ever remember, that He, on account of whose birth an oblation, suited only to the circumstances of the poor, was made, could have commanded all the treasures of the world; that the Son of Man,

at whose devotion might have been all the dominions of the earth, had not where to lay His head. Let us shew a proper sense of the advantages we enjoy, by receiving them, not as tokens of our merit, but as instances of God's bounty : and let us only consider the blessings of Divine Providence by which we are distinguished, as larger means of doing good ; and thereby lay a good foundation of hope in God's mercy through Jesus Christ, of riches, and honour, and glory, in the world to come,

Now to GOD the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour, and glory, thanksgiving and praise, henceforth and for evermore. AMEN.

SAINT MATTHIAS

THE APOSTLE.

FEBRUARY 24.

M 4

SAINT MATTHIAS

SAINT MATTHIAS

THE APOSTLE

THE Lord, said Solomon, "is cast
into the sea, and the whole dispo-
sition of the Lord." Of this opi-
nion were St. Peter, and the hundred and
twenty disciples, to whom he addressed
himself on the occasion of appointing the
Apostle of this day to his sacred office.
It was necessary, St. Peter told them, that
the Scriptures should be fulfilled, which
had foretold the vile spitting of Judas,
who was guide to them that took Jesus.

SAINT MATTHIAS.

ACTS I. 26.

And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.

THE lot," saith Solomon, "is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the LORD." Of this opinion were St. Peter, and the hundred and twenty disciples, to whom he addressed himself on the occasion of appointing the Apostle of this day to his sacred office. It was necessary, St. Peter told them, that the Scriptures should be fulfilled, which had foretold the vile apostasy of Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus.

Having

Having been numbered with the Apostles, and having obtained part of their ministry, he betrayed his Divine Master, and with the reward of his treachery and iniquity he purchased the field of blood. By the just judgment of Heaven, his punishment was as signal as his guilt: "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." Having thus by transgression fallen, and being gone to his own place, it became necessary, that the prophecy should be fulfilled, that his bishoprick, his office, or charge, another should take. St. Peter points out the time when such an arrangement should take place, as would once more complete the number of the twelve Apostles. He first shews them, who they were, from whose number the person so about to be appointed should be taken; and then they proceed to the election with every

every circumstance of pious solemnity.

“ Of these men which have companied
“ with us, all the time that the LORD
“ Jesus went in and out among us, begin-
“ ning from the baptism of John, until
“ that same day that He was taken up
“ from us, must one be ordained to be a
“ witness with us of His resurrection.”

I cannot avoid remarking, on reciting this passage, what infinite care was taken respecting the competency of the person to be chosen for the office to which he was about to be called. He was to be one who had been acquainted with our Blessed Saviour's person, doctrines, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension. He was to be enabled (as he would probably be called on to do it) to bear his testimony to the truth of Christ's divinity, the power of His miracles, the wonders of His death, and the still greater wonders of His triumph
over

over death, and His re-assumption of His heavenly glory. A lesson of the highest importance to those whose situation calls upon them to take care, what manner of persons they set apart for the great work of administering God's holy word and sacraments. On the occasion before us, two are selected, Joseph called Barfabas*, who, doubtless, for his eminently righteous character was surnamed *Justus*; and the Saint whom we now commemorate, *Matthias*.

* It is true that there was a distinguished Christian teacher of the appellation of Barfabas, but it appears (Ch. xv. 22.) that his original name was not *Joseph*, but *Judas*.—Many eminent critics are of opinion that an early error crept into the original text, and that the person nominated with St. Matthias was Barnabas, not Barfabas.—He is mentioned (Acts, Ch. iv. 36.) as having received that addition to his Jewish name of *Joseph*, or *Joses*, by the Apostles, and is every where distinguished as an illustrious professor of the faith, called afterwards by the immediate designation of Heaven to the “work of the ministry,” as an Apostle, in conjunction with St. Paul. [Acts, Ch. xiii. 2.]

To

To the Omniscient God the Apostles be-
take themselves in all the fervency of hum-
ble prayer; "Thou, LORD," say they,
"which knowest the hearts of all men,"
and consequently best knowest which of
these two persons will most effectually
promote the honour of thy Gospel, and
the interests of thy true Religion, "shew
"whether of these two thou hast chosen:
"that he, whom thou shalt esteem most
"worthy, may take part of this ministry
"and apostleship, from which Judas by
"transgression fell, that he might go to
"his own place, and receive the just re-
"compence of his unparallelled iniquity;"
iniquity of so black a nature, that language
cannot describe, nor thought itself conceive
it. "Good were it for him, by whom the
"Son of Man was betrayed, good were it
"for that man, if he had never been born."
What a strong testimony is here given of
these

these holy persons' entire submission to the particular Providence of God, watching over His Church, and the concerns, the qualifications, and the destination of every individual member of it!

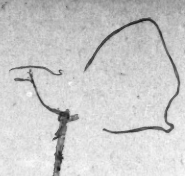
Having implored the direction of Heaven, "they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon *Matthias*, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles."

Invested as we now behold this Saint of God with apostolic authority, and appointed thereto by the decision of Heaven, (a decision which, though it might be dangerous in the present state of the Church, was in those primitive days of all others most eligible, God himself directing the choice of His servants,) we find him continuing at Jerusalem with his brethren, till the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured upon them. There is every reason to conclude, that the success which accompanied his

his

his first exertions in Judea, fully justified his appointment, as an able, zealous, and faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On the dispersion of the infant Church he extended his labours to the Eastern world; where the barbarians, unacquainted with the charitable purpose of his endeavours in their behalf, and not aware that the tendency of the Gospel which he came to deliver was to soften and civilize them, and promote their happiness in this life and the next, treated him with the utmost inhumanity: notwithstanding which many were found who were prevailed on by him to accept and embrace the Gospel. The event, however, was that, for which he doubtless was prepared from the time of his appointment to the arduous task of labouring to do good to his fellow-creatures, and to rescue them from ignorance and error. Whether he fell by the malice

of



of the Jews, who considered his doctrine as blasphemy against the law of Moses, whilst he preached the Gospel of a crucified Saviour; and who inflicted the punishment ordained by their law against blasphemers, by stoning him to death; or whether he suffered the death of his Blessed Master on the cross is left in uncertainty; both narratives are handed down to us by different writers, and which account is most accurate is a question not very material to be determined: on all hands it is agreed, that his name is deservedly enrolled in the list of that noble army of martyrs, who contended unto death for the faith, and sealed their testimony in favour of the Gospel with their blood.

It does not appear, that we have any writings of this Apostle, which may justly be considered as genuine and authentic. One saying is, however, left on record which is attributed to him, and which I shall

shall mention here, and it is of infinite importance towards the regulation of every Christian's conduct. He was often wont to say to his disciples and converts, "That we ought to mortify and subdue the flesh, and maintain a continual opposition to it; granting it nothing, whereby its irregular and sensual desires may be gratified; but on the contrary, nourishing and fortifying our souls with faith and divine knowledge."

While we are thus celebrating the fidelity of the successor of Judas, our thoughts are necessarily turned for a moment to the impious traitor himself. And here we cannot but contemplate with horror the dreadful fall of that apostate disciple; who, from being a *companion*, and (as our Saviour is sometimes pleased to stile every one of the twelve) a *friend* of the divine Instructor and Redeemer of mankind, became the perfidious and detested instrument of His death.

death. He had repeatedly received instructions from the mouth of Christ; and must have known that "never man spake like THIS MAN:" he must have been often the eye-witness of His astonishing miracles; such as he must have known no man could perform, except God were with Him: he must have preached, he must have even wrought miracles in the name of Jesus; he must have noticed the spotless purity, the incomparable meekness, the unwearied patience, the boundless charity, the admirable perfection of His general conduct; and must have been convinced, by a thousand demonstrations, that he was indeed the Son of God; and yet, behold the effect of avarice in blinding the eyes against every sense of duty, and every conviction of the mind! Well may this sin be described as the root of all evil. It was this covetous spirit which induced him to accept from the

accom-

accomplices of his guilt the thirty pieces of silver, the abject price at which the life of our Redeemer was valued; and for which he undertook to deliver Him into the hands of His enemies. And let it be remembered, that the same spirit, which was so ruinous to the traitor Judas, will prove equally destructive to all those who suffer themselves to be misled from the path of duty and conscience by the prevalence of this evil principle. It rendered a chosen Apostle first a thief, and then a traitor. For a few vile pieces of silver he delivered up his Blessed Master to murderers, and his own soul to unutterable misery. Let him not have perished everlastingly in vain. From his fall let us learn wisdom; and let the miserable end of this wretch, forfeiting every thing that was, or should have been, dear to him, for such a paltry recompence, engrave on our hearts, in characters which can never

be effaced, this very important truth, That it shall by no means profit a man, for him to gain even the whole world, if he should lose his own soul, and be a cast-away.

The conduct of this pious assembly on the occasion of electing St. *Matthias* to his sacred charge seems all that remains to be noticed at present; and it is a matter highly worthy our attentive consideration.

In our various situations and concerns, numberless difficulties will disturb and perplex our minds; and the most conscientious men will perhaps be found most liable to fluctuate in uncertainty. In all such cases, it will be safe and satisfactory to address ourselves to Heaven for direction: not renouncing, however, one of the best gifts of God, the aid of that reason, and power of discernment, with which He hath been pleased to bless us; but beseeching Him so to direct us, that our reason may not be

warped by prejudice or passion; that we may exercise its powers with honesty and integrity; and with a sincere intention to promote the glory of God, the welfare of mankind, and the eternal benefit of our own souls.

There are two sorts of persons, who on occasions similar to that which we are now considering, are particularly called upon to use their utmost diligence and care in circumstances of deep responsibility. I mean such as are concerned in the appointment of pastors to the Churches, of which they have the patronage; and such as are immediately employed in the ordination of persons to the work of the ministry; in which I include not merely those, whose duty calls on them to perform the solemn office of ordination, but also those who are previously required to give their testimony in behalf of such as

are about to be recommended and presented to the Bishop. How wretchedly have indolence, indifference, and false compliance induced men to lend their names, and sport with their consciences in a matter of the most serious importance! I pray God, that my brethren of the Clergy may be induced to lay this matter in future seriously to heart. Let it be seen, that only a true sense of religion, sound principles, and holy and heavenly dispositions can hope for admission to the most sacred employment in the world: and that such as presume to make their way towards the service of the altar, careless whether through evil or good report, may expect to be sent away, disappointed and ashamed, till, through God's grace, they return to a better mind.

We cannot, however, too clearly inculcate this important truth, that the personal unworthiness of the ministers of the Gos-

pel

pel detracts nothing from the sacred nature of the doctrines which they teach, or from the saving efficacy of the mysteries which they administer. Judas Iscariot preached, and taught, and worked miracles; but hard indeed would it be, if the best of causes were to suffer from the infirmities, or even the depravity of its advocates. Eternal Truth is ever one; and be his ambassadors as frail and imperfect as they may, Jesus Christ, His word, His gospel, and His sacraments are the same, perfect, pure, immutable, "without variableness, or shadow of turning."

But though the ordinances of religion administered even by a Judas, lost not their effect on those who were worthy receivers of the truth, yet such holy persons as we contemplate in the character of this day's Apostle, and such as, (God be praised,) we have frequently, even at the present

INT N 4 hour,

hour, the satisfaction of beholding dispersed in their several stations, and zealously occupied in the services of Religion, do certainly afford the greatest degree of comfort to the flock, to whose spiritual welfare they are appointed to minister: whilst their holy precepts are enforced and strengthened by their pious examples; and while they take heed to themselves and to their doctrine; always endeavouring, that their light may so shine before men, that others, beholding their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven:

To whom, with the SON and the HOLY GHOST, Three Persons and One GOD, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all honour, and glory, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

THE
ANNUNCIATION
TO THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

MARCH 25.

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the membership of the Society since the last meeting. The names are given in alphabetical order, and the date of admission is given in parentheses.

ANNUNCIATION
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MARCH 17
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THE
ANNUNCIATION

* TO THE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

St. LUKE I. 28.

*And the Angel came in unto her, and said,
“ Hail, thou that art highly favoured;
the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou
among women,”*

THE Festival which the Church calls
upon us to celebrate this day, is one
of the most interesting and important of
all that present themselves to our confide-
ration. We welcome its arrival, as the

* We have ventured, for an obvious reason, to
make this slight alteration in the title.

early

early dawn of that glorious day, which brought light and salvation to a sinful world. We are told, that, in the sixth month, that is, in the sixth month after the extraordinary birth of John the Baptist had been foretold, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth; to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. To this virtuous, humble, and pious servant of God, he delivers the astonishing message, that she should be the mother of the Redeemer of mankind. Amazed and confounded as she appears at intelligence of such an extraordinary nature, she is soothed by the Angel with assurances of divine favour: "Fear not, Mary; thou hast found favour with God;" thou art distinguished above all thy sex; thou art selected as worthy of the most distinguished honour
ever

ever conferred on any mortal since the creation of the world : “ for behold, thou shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the LORD GOD shall give unto Him the throne of his father David ; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” This event, in which the interests of all mankind are involved, from Adam to his latest posterity, had long since been foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, in terms so similar to those in which the Angel here expresses himself, that the words of the Prophet are more like the description of a past, than the prediction of a future, transaction : “ Unto us a Child *is* born ; unto us a Son *is* given. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon

“ upon his kingdom, to order it and to
“ establish it with judgment and with
“ justice, from henceforth even for ever.”

By which prophetic declaration, here confirmed by the message of an Angel, we are to understand, that a spiritual kingdom should be established by the Messiah; that on a rock He would build His Church; that His kingdom should endure for ever; and that the gates of hell should never prevail against it: in which respect, namely, its eternal duration, it would differ from all the kingdoms of the world, which in time are brought to nought, and their glory and greatness vanish away.

The distinguished virtues of the Blessed Virgin, her humility and lowliness of heart, pointed her out, to the all-searching wisdom of God, as a person worthy of bestowing on the world the long-promised blessing of a Redeemer. We wonder not to find her
declaring

declaring herself unworthy of such an honour as that which was intended her. We are told that she was *troubled* at the appearance of the Angel, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. In the ordinary course of nature she knew it to be impossible, that the promise of the Angel should be fulfilled; but he proceeds immediately to inform her, that it should take place by means of the miraculous influence of the Holy Ghost: and because the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Blessed Trinity, is of equal glory, power, and eternity with the Father and the Son, and is very and eternal God, therefore the divine offspring which should be born of her should be called the SON OF GOD.

But though difficulties had occurred to the holy Virgin on her first receiving this intimation from above, which occasioned her humbly to solicit further information from the Angel, we are not therefore to consider

consider her as under the influence of any distrust, or unbelief of the almighty power of God. To remove, however, all manner of doubt and anxiety from her thoughts, and to dispel those terrors which human nature could not entirely do away, she is reminded by her celestial visitant, that with God nothing is impossible; and is referred to the case of her kinswoman *Elisabeth*, the aged wife of an aged husband, as an example of the interposition of almighty power, to fulfil the purposes of divine wisdom. The holy Virgin now hesitates no longer; but in humble conviction expresses to the Angel her entire faith, her absolute submission, her perfect obedience to the will of God; "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word."

Soon after this interview, we find her saluted in a very extraordinary manner by *Elisabeth*, on her entrance into the house of *Zacharias*; "Blessed art thou among women,

“ women, and blessed is the fruit of thy
“ womb ; and whence is this to me, that
“ the mother of my LORD should come
“ to me? Blessed is she who hath be-
“ lieved : for there shall be a performance
“ of those things, which have been told her
“ from the LORD.” On this occasion, the
Blessed Virgin expresses her grateful sense
of the singular honour conferred upon her,
in that admirable hymn, which our Church
has, with so great propriety, introduced into
her evening sacrifice of praise : in which
she declares her unfeigned gratitude for the
favour with which she was distinguished ;
and rejoiceth in “ GOD HER SAVIOUR :”
ascribing to Him that title of divinity,
of which the pride of vain philosophy
is anxious to deprive Him. We cannot
doubt, that the blessed Mary was so di-
vinely illuminated, as fully to comprehend
the nature of that Mystery of godliness

now about to be revealed to the world, in the character of JESUS the Son of God, that Divine Person who was about to be born of her. She had, at this moment, a satisfactory perception of the nature of that promise made unto our fathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever; the promise, that in him and in his seed, *which was CHRIST*, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. She expresses her sense of the gracious condescension of God, in passing by the great, the rich, and noble of this world; and in “regarding the low estate of his handmaiden;” whom every future generation would pronounce to be eminently blessed; because she had experienced a miraculous demonstration of His power and goodness, in a blessing not confined to herself alone, but extended to all who should hereafter fear Him, from generation to generation. His mighty hand

was

was about to work redemption for a sinful world; and to defeat the pride and malice of Satan and his evil instruments; shewing strength with his holy arm, casting down every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and scattering the proud in the imaginations of their hearts. She affirms, that, with the Author of all real greatness and glory, (from whom every good and every perfect gift proceedeth,) before honour is humility; that, whilst He exalteth the humble and meek, such as walk in pride, He is able to abase. She teaches us, that the tendency of that Gospel, which her divine Offspring was about to communicate to the world, would be to satisfy with its blessings such as hunger and thirst after righteousness; whilst such as vainly fancied they were rich, and had need of nothing, should be *sent empty away*, and accounted unworthy of the blessing of

eternal

eternal life. This is the substance and meaning of that song of praise in which the holy Virgin celebrates the mercy of God, towards herself, and the whole race of mankind.

But while this Festival hath a more immediate relation to the Virgin Mary, it likewise demands our regard, as having reference to the Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour: in which view some of the ancient fathers, fixing their thoughts on the great and glorious event of Christ's coming in the flesh to redeem mankind, held this day in more than ordinary veneration. They considered it as opening to the eye of faith that divine mystery, which the servant of Christ can never cease to adore, the wonderful union of "two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the manhood in one person, the great Mediator between heaven and earth,

Christ

Christ Jesus, very God and very man ;” that so He might be enabled to offer up Himself a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world ; and might, at the same time, by virtue of His almighty power, remit the sentence of death, incurred by all mankind in the person of their first parents, and open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. It was impossible that the divine nature could suffer and die ; and it was as impossible that any human being could offer an equivalent satisfaction for sin : for no mere man can redeem his brother, or pay to God a ransom for him. The redemption of souls is not within the reach of human power, and must, therefore, without the interposition of Divine Omnipotence, be let alone for ever : but the contemplation of the divine and human nature united in the person of Him

who is not two but one Christ, removes every difficulty, gives life to our hope, and stability to our faith. The Christian reflects, with that confidence and joy, which the Gospel only can administer, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself;" that in the man Christ Jesus "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" that He whom the Jews crucified, was "the Lord of Glory;" that He who gave up the ghost on a cross, and afterwards was laid in the grave, did raise Himself from thence by His own almighty power, and thereby demonstrated Himself to be "the Giver of life eternal, the Lord our Righteousness."

It remains, now, that we consider, how this distinguished Festival may be rightly observed. To this end it is our especial duty to praise and adore the mercy of God the Father, the condescension of God the Son,

Son, and the all-powerful influences of God the Holy Ghost, unitedly displayed in order to accomplish the great work of our salvation. God the Father so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life: God the Son, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, made Himself of no reputation; divested Himself of His glory, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He took upon Him the form of a servant; endured reproaches, contradictions, and revilings for our sakes, and after a life of the deepest humiliation, to deliver us from the guilt and punishment of sin, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. God the Holy Ghost, by imparting to us His sanctifying grace, enables us to become

fit objects of redeeming mercy: applies to our souls all the benefits of the Incarnation and Atonement of the Son of God, and guides us with His counsel, that He may hereafter receive us to glory. Thus, as the holy Trinity was engaged in the original formation of man, when that divine consultation took place, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," even so, in his restoration to that spiritual and eternal life, which had been forfeited through sin, the same gracious efforts were in like manner employed.

And are they not then of all men most miserable, who, when so much hath been done and suffered for their salvation, yield themselves voluntary captives to sin and Satan, and despise those mercies, which have been wrought for their deliverance from death, and their restoration to life, and glory, and immortality, in Heaven?

Can

Can we contemplate this wonderful union of the divine and human nature, without an earnest desire to be spiritually united to Him, who was pleased to be united to the condition and circumstances of frail humanity; being in all things made like unto us, sin only excepted? Shall we not seek Him, where He will assuredly be found, in His word, and in His sacraments; those pledges of His love whereby we are made members of that mystical body the Church, of which He is the head; whereby "we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us? Having at our baptism professed to believe what He hath revealed; having promised, by our sureties, to perform what He hath commanded; and having solemnly vowed that we would direct our future conduct according to the precepts of His Gospel; we in the other Sacra-

ment

ment renew these sacred engagements; and profess our union with our fellow-christians, as being all partakers of the same body and blood, and thereby partakers of the same faith, and the same hope, inheritors of the same blessings purchased and prepared in the kingdom of Heaven for all believers.

There is one circumstance which to an assembly of Protestants needs scarcely to be mentioned; which is, that the reformed and Protestant Church of England, in however high and venerable a light it may consider the character of the Virgin Mary, does by no means bestow any degree of adoration upon her; nor entertains the impious thought, that she is an intercessor between Christ and us, as our glorified Redeemer is, between the divine nature, and mankind. We forbear such extravagant mockery of praise, totally repugnant

pugnant to the truth of the Gospel, and the tenor of the Christian Religion. We worship the LORD our GOD, and Him only do we serve. We acknowlege One, and One only Mediator between GOD and men, the Man Christ Jesus. We know, that if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and that HE, and only HE, is the propitiation for our sins. It is one great privilege of our adoption into the family of Christ, that we are admitted to a share in those promises of care and protection which He hath made to His Church: that we are within the reach of His covenanted mercies; and within the efficacy (if it be not our own fault) of His incarnation, and atonement; His death, resurrection, and ascension; and His infinitely prevalent intercession in our behalf.

Of

Of the benefits of which may it please
God of His infinite mercy to make us all
partakers, through the same Jesus Christ
our LORD:

*To whom, with the FATHER and the
HOLY GHOST, Three Persons and One
God, be all honour and glory, thanksgiving
and praise, world without end. AMEN.*

SAINT MARK

THE EVANGELIST.

APRIL 25.

SAINT MARK

THE EVANGELIST

APRIL 28

SAINT MARK.

EPHESIANS IV. 14.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

THE Apostle is here speaking of God's gracious care of His Church, in order to preserve it from error, and establish it in the belief and knowlege of the truth. Scarcely had the good seed of the Gospel begun to take root in the earth, when the tares and noxious weeds of heresy sprang up, the advocates of which
were

were possessed of ability to render error plausible, and of activity which prompted their endeavours to support it. To obviate these evil effects, GOD in mercy gave to His Church a variety of persons able and willing to maintain the truth inviolate and pure, against all the efforts of its adversaries: "He gave some, Apostles; and some, " Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and " some, Pastors and Teachers; for the " perfecting of the saints, for the work " of the ministry, for the edifying of the " body of Christ; till we all come in the " unity of the faith, and of the knowledge " of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, " unto the measure of the stature of the " fulness of Christ." One of the above illustrious characters we gratefully commemorate this day, in the character of the Evangelist *St. Mark*: under which denomination you will understand the Messenger of

of good Tidings; for that is the literal interpretation of the word—a word now exclusively appropriated to those four inspired writers*, to whose labours the Christian world is particularly indebted for the authentic and most edifying history of the life, the doctrine, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ; whose Gospel is transmitted by their ministry to the Christian Church, and will be the guide and support, the direction and comfort, of every true believer, even to the end of the world. By His Holy Spirit he directed these His chosen saints and servants to communicate to after-ages the blessings of redemption. The LORD gave the word—

* Isaiah, from his wonderful predictions respecting the Incarnation, Atonement, Life, Sufferings and Death of the Son of God, has been by some called, *The EVANGELICAL PROPHET*. See in particular Chapters vii, ix, xl, l, liii, and lx, of his divine prophecy.

great was the power, great was the efficacy which attended the ministry of those who published it: and who, through divine inspiration, were enabled to bear testimony to the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus. This word is, by every well-disposed Christian, considered as the pillar, by which our faith is supported, and the foundation whereon it stands. From the very beginning of Christianity, these sacred compositions made a part of their sabbath-day's, and probably of every day's service; and they are, in the earliest ages of the Church, appealed to, as the test of Divine Truth, for the establishment of the Christian faith, for the conviction of those who opposed the doctrine of Christ, and for the defence and confirmation of the Gospel.

Of the Evangelist *St. Mark*, his historian, (St. Jerome,) gives the following account—that he was the son of Jewish parents

rents—and that he derived his origin from the tribe of *Levi*. This opinion is confirmed and supported by some peculiarities in his style and language, though his name, which was probably added at some subsequent period of his life to that given him at his circumcision, has nothing of Hebrew character belonging to it. This holy Martyr and Evangelist must not be confounded with another person, whose name is frequently mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as *John*, whose surname was *Mark*; and of whom what is there spoken, is not said much to his advantage; he having been rejected by St. Paul, as unworthy to accompany him into Asia, because, on a former occasion, he had too much consulted his own ease and safety, and had shrunk from a service of difficulty and danger. Yet both justice require us to add, that the person there spoken of was

so far roused from his indifference by this censure of St. Paul, as afterwards to become an useful minister of the Gospel, and to deserve this testimony from that Apostle, that he was "profitable to him for the ministry."

The Saint, whom we this day commemorate, was converted from Judaism by some of the Apostles, and probably by St. Peter; who speaks of him under the endearing character of Marcus, his son; his constant companion in all his travels; and he is also mentioned as one that had the gift of interpreting tongues, and as having assisted his honoured Instructor in this service. Alexandria in Egypt, and the country adjoining to it, is said to have been the primary residence of this zealous Minister of the Gospel for a considerable time; and very extraordinary was his success, in converting multitudes to a firm belief

belief of the doctrines, and to a strict observance of the precepts of Christianity. The next scene of our Evangelist's ministration was the country of Lybia, whose inhabitants were barbarians and idolaters; against whose ignorance and prejudices, however, this faithful servant of Christ strove with the happiest effect; persuading them to embrace the Gospel, and to continue steadfast in the profession of it. But it was not ordained by Providence, that the labours of this holy man should be uninterrupted, his success unimpeded, or his person preserved beyond the reach of injury; on the contrary, he stands among the foremost of those who suffered the most grievous punishments for the testimony of the Gospel. For, on his return into Egypt, after his settlement of the Church in Lybia, while *St. Mark* was occupied in promoting the worship of the true God, the

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idolatrous rabble rushed forth from their unhallowed temple, and seizing the blessed Martyr, dragged him through the streets, and thrust him into prison. I purposely forbear to recite the horrid cruelties which ensued, and which terminated in his death; let it suffice to observe, that his faith and patience were invincible, rising superior to all his trials; and that in the midst of them the word was fulfilled, with which He who promised to be with His servants to the end of the world animated their faith and constancy, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

It is to the converts at Rome, who had experienced the blessed effects of St. Peter's preaching, that the Christian Church is indebted for the Gospel written by St. Mark. This Gospel, we are told, passed under the inspection of St. Peter; and, having received the sanction of his authority, was read

read in the public assemblies, as an authentic record of the important truths which it contains. It is more concise, but not less faithful, than the Gospel of the other three Evangelists; and supplies, in some particulars, what is omitted by the rest: the whole together forming a complete system of duty, a complete body of information, on subjects of infinite and everlasting consequence.

To the study of this Gospel we are encouraged in the text by an assurance, that it will tend to keep us steadfast in the faith; that it will prevent our being "carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, like children tossed to and fro," an easy prey to the artifice of those, who continually lie in wait to deceive. "A double-minded man," he whose faith is not grounded and settled in the holy Scriptures, "is unstable in all his ways:" but he to whom

the word of God is as "a lamp to his feet, and a light unto his paths," walketh steadfastly, because he walketh surely: equally secure against the malice of the infidel, who would undermine his principles, and the delusions of the superstitious, who would seduce him into error. Our best security is in the constant study of those Scriptures, which "are given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" which are handed down to us with all possible evidence of their truth; and with every assurance, that all things contained in them were communicated to their authors by the Holy Ghost. You will remember, that, in the first Psalm, the man is pronounced "Blessed, whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates (or exercises himself) therein day and night." It is the grand preservative
against

against error in opinion, as well as against profligacy of conduct. The enemies of the Gospel, in the earliest ages of Christianity, found it impossible to shake the constancy of those professors, who chose rather to meet death in its most terrifying form, than to renounce the holy Scriptures: in vain did they require them to consign their Bibles to the flames*; in which they chose rather to be consumed themselves, than to deliver up those sacred records to be vilified and destroyed. The adversaries of the truth were well aware, that no endeavours of theirs to discourage the

* The apostate Christians, who, in the time of the Dioclesian persecution, to avoid the fury of the tyrant, delivered up their Bibles, were distinguished by the name of *Traditores*. The first Council of Arles, held soon after, deposed all convicted of this crime from the Clerical Order. "De his qui Scripturas sanctas tradidisse dicuntur, placuit nobis, ut quicumque fuerit detectus, ab ordine Cleri amoveatur." Conc. Arelat. i. Can. 13.

See BINGHAM, L. 16.

general acceptance of the Gospel would avail, whilst the primitive Christians held it in their hands, and transcribed its rules into their hearts and lives: in their zeal to tear them from their grasp, they tacitly acknowledged, that there was something in them of power sufficient to arm them against every effort which might be put in force to turn them aside from the path of truth and righteousness.

It remains, therefore, that we exhort our fellow-christians, especially on such occasions as the present, to remember, how highly we stand indebted to the mercy of God, who hath instructed his holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of these Evangelists; and to treat that Gospel which they delivered to mankind with the utmost reverence, as the most precious gift of God to His Church. Under this impresson, we shall gladly embrace all opportunities of consulting

consulting these Oracles of infinite and unerring wisdom. They will make a part of our daily study. We shall hasten to those sacred places, wherein they are read, and explained: we shall be studious to hear what the LORD GOD by the mouth of His holy Prophets, His Blessed Son, His inspired Apostles, and His divine Evangelists shall say concerning us: we shall listen to His promises with joyful hope; to His threatenings with reverential awe; to His admonitions with profound attention; and to His exhortations with a willing disposition to obey them. We shall receive those mysterious truths, which surpass our comprehension, with modesty and humility; well knowing, that pride is the pernicious source of heresy and unbelief; and that inordinate self-conceit, which refuses to admit the truth of what is so generally believed, is founded on a vain affectation of discern-

discernment, which would arrogate to itself superiority over the rest of mankind. We shall approach the fountains of wisdom and knowledge with an honest and pious disposition of mind, with an earnest desire to know what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, and with a sincere intention to conform to it, when known; well assured, that no necessary information will be withholden, where there is not a want of inclination to obey. "If any man will do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it be of God:" he shall receive the holy Gospel not only as a rule of faith, but of obedience. Without the latter, it is vain to expect the blessings, whereof we are made capable by the former. "This is the way, walk ye in it:"—this is the law of God; read, hear, and obey it. By this must ye regulate your conduct; by this will

will ye hereafter be judged at the tribunal of Christ. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," Here, even here are they to be found!

By this employment of our time and talents we shall find our faith confirmed, our hope established, our charity increased, our virtues improved, and our souls daily more and more prepared for the enjoyment of that glory, which the Eternal Son of God hath purchased for us, and which was then most fully revealed to mankind, when life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel.

*Now to GOD the FATHER, the SON,
and the HOLY GHOST, the GOD whom
Angels,*

*Angels, and Archangels, and the spirits of
just men made perfect, whether Patriarchs,
or Prophets, or Apostles, or Evangelists, or
Confessors, or Martyrs, do praise with un-
ceasing adoration, be ascribed, as is most
due, all worship, honour, and thanksgiving,
all might, majesty, and dominion, world
without end. AMEN.*

ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES,

APOSTLES.

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ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES

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ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES.

St. JOHN XIV. 8, 9.

Philip saith unto Him, LORD, shew us the FATHER, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen ME, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, "Shew us the Father?"

IS it possible to read these words, or to hear them recited, and not to feel ourselves reduced to this alternative; either to acknowledge, that they expressly declare the absolute

absolute Divinity of Christ, or that they declare that, which not only is not founded in fact, but is—what I dare not utter, when I consider by whom they were spoken?—
 LORD, we are taught this day particularly to acknowlege Thee to be the *Way*, and the *Truth*, and the *Life*; and therefore we gratefully accept and implicitly believe thine own testimony concerning Thyself, that Thou art in the Father, and the Father in Thee. We believe, and are sure, that whosoever hath seen Thee, hath seen, not the all-glorious majesty of God, (which is too resplendent for human sight to behold,) but Him who, as to His divine nature, is equal to the Father in majesty, power, and eternity, and is only inferior to the Father, so far as respects the finless infirmities of His humanity.

or This much it seemed necessary to premise, as suggested by the words of the

text,

text, to obviate the dangerous and heretical notions of those, who, in defiance of this, and a multitude of assertions full as positive as this, in the sacred records, affirm, that the Saviour of the world was a mere man, without any pre-existence, till He made His appearance in the world: and of those, who, allowing Him to be something more than man, nay, even allowing Him a participation of the divine nature, yet refuse to admit, what it is the Christian's greatest comfort to believe, that in Him that died for our salvation "dwelt all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." This firm persuasion leads us to a full assurance, that "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him:" that He is *the Way* in which we should walk, *the Truth* in which we may confide, and *the Life* to which our hopes are raised, in that better world

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which is before us. It was in this *Way* that the saints of God marched with firmness and invincible courage even unto death: it was this *Truth* which they earnestly embraced, stedfastly believed, and strenuously persisted in, even when called to deliver their testimony not only at the hazard of their lives, but with the certainty of losing them: it was to *this Life* which they earnestly and affectionately invited their followers, even to the Son of Man, who hath *Life* in Himself*, and who bestows the promise of eternal life on all that love and fear Him.

“That which was from the beginning,
 “which we have heard, which we have
 “seen with our eyes, which we have
 “looked upon, and our hands have han-

* Of whom could this be said with any truth or propriety, but of the very and eternal God? What created being hath *Life* in HIMSELF, with power to lay it down, and power to take it again?

“died

" dled of the Word of LIFE; (for the
 " LIFE was manifested, and we have seen
 " it, and bear witness, and shew unto you
 " that eternal LIFE which was with the
 " Father, and was manifested unto us;)
 " that which we have seen and heard,
 " declare we unto you, that ye also may
 " have fellowship with us; and truly our
 " fellowship is with the Father, and with
 " His Son Jesus Christ."

In the illustrious catalogue of those who
 are here declared to have their fellowship
 with God, are found the names of the
 two holy Apostles, whose sufferings we
 this day commemorate, St. *Philip* and St.
James; the latter of whom is stiled "the
 Less," to distinguish him from the other
 Apostle of the same name; possibly from
 the circumstance of his stature, but more
 probably from the difference in their re-

spective ages*. Of St. *Philip* we are informed, that the place of his birth was *Bethsaida*, a town in *Galilee*; the natives of which were held in lower estimation, than any other inhabitants of Palestine; and if the question were applicable to other parts of the country, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" it might perhaps with still greater reason have been asked, "Can any Prophet or Apostle arise out of Bethsaida?" But He, who could have performed His great work of conversion without any means at all, chose *them* for His instruments, whose weakness would tend to magnify His power; who, without the aid of human learning, or external advantages, would be able to confound the wis-

* He afterwards was known among the professors of the Christian Church by a more appropriate and more honourable title. See p. 184.

dom of the wife; who, without the charms of mortal eloquence, could overcome the false prejudices of those, who, relying on mere worldly knowledge, and the oppositions of science falsely so called, were the determined adversaries of the truth.

As *Bethsaida* was in the neighbourhood of the sea of *Tiberias*, it is probable that St. *Philip*'s employment had been of the same kind with that of his fellow-labourers in the Gospel; many of whom were called from their well-known occupation to become teachers of divine truth, and were enabled by the Holy Ghost to become *fishers of men*. This highly-privileged person appears to have been the first-called disciple of our Saviour; and being called, he instantly left his ordinary profession, engaged in the work of the ministry, and betook himself with zeal and alacrity to the discharge of its sacred duties. The

command of Christ to follow Him, was accompanied on this, as on other occasions, with a peculiar communication of divine grace; and the mind of our Apostle was animated, as might naturally be expected, with an earnest desire to direct others into the same way of happiness with himself: for we no sooner hear of him as a disciple of Christ, than we find him hastening to Nathanael, (better known by the name of Bartholomew,) and joyfully acquainting him, "that he had found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph;" who was the true Messiah, the Anointed of God, the Saviour of the world. From this time we find him admitted to the society of his divine Master, who afterwards called him to the distinguished honour of the Apostleship.

Our

Our blessed LORD, when He was about to display his creative power by miraculously feeding the assembled multitudes, to prove the faith of *Philip*, demanded of him whence a sufficiency of bread could be procured, that they might eat? The answer demonstrates, that as yet the disciple had not arrived at that degree of perfection to which he afterwards attained; that, as yet, he had not a full reliance on the omnipotence of his Saviour. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread would by no means be sufficient, that every one of them might take a little." On a future occasion, our Saviour, in the words of the text, gently reproves him for having not profited, as he might have done, by the many demonstrations He had given of His almighty power and Godhead: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"—From this awaken-

ing

ing question, let us learn, that our proficiency in Christian knowledge must be in proportion to the advantages which we have received. The rule is according to justice and the most perfect wisdom; that "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required." The privileges vouchsafed to this Apostle were many and great; and therefore he was exhorted to display such faith, zeal, courage, and constancy, as might correspond with his high calling in Christ Jesus. The divine Monitor did not in vain teach his chosen servant the way of his statutes. Having learned the truth of God from the great Author of truth, and having freely and to the utmost advantage partaken of the waters of life, he dispensed them with indefatigable ardour. Thus he discharged the duties of his high office, and accomplished the glorious work he was commissioned to perform; till, at length,

his uncommon success in the suppression of idolatry at Hierapolis, a city in Phrygia, brought upon him the resentment of the enemies of the truth, which terminated in the destruction of this faithful servant of God. The magistrates put him into prison, ordered him to be severely scourged, and after this preparatory cruelty led him to a painful and ignominious death. During his martyrdom, the earth shook, the elements were convulsed, and the servant of God, in the hour of his departure, is said to have gained more proselytes to Christianity, than at any period of his life. His remains were consigned to their grave by the pious care of his sister Mariamne, and of his friend and fellow-labourer St. Bartholomew.

With respect to the origin and family of the other Saint, whom we commemorate this day, we know little more than that,

in the extended sense, in which not only brotherhood, but near relationship in general is comprehended by ancient writers, he is stiled "the Brother of our LORD;" which honourable title might possibly be bestowed on the children of Joseph by a former wife. It is of greater importance to the character of St. *James*, that the eminent piety and uprightness of his life and conduct entitled him to the denomination of "St. *James* the JUST;" by which name he was for many ages distinguished throughout the Christian world. This Apostle was appointed to preside over the metropolitan Church of Jerusalem; and appears to have taken a very active part in the establishment of ecclesiastical discipline and order, amongst the early professors of Christianity. In the midst of his honours, and in the dignity of his situation, he retained that meekness and humility,

lity, which is the highest ornament, the most illustrious distinction of the faithful servant of Jesus. His manifold important occupations were never suffered to interfere with his constant performance of the duty of prayer: and he who hath taught us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," found it true, by his own experience; when, in a time of severe and unusual drought, his supplications pierced the clouds, and caused a blessing to descend from above, the heavens melting at his request in fruitful showers. His virtues in short were such, as commanded not only the reverence of his fellow-christians, but even the respect of the Jews, the inveterate enemies of his profession. At length, however, but not till he had attained to a very advanced old age, it was determined by the secret counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that

that this venerable and illustrious servant of Christ should be called to the still more honourable distinction of martyrdom. The Jews prefer an accusation against him, as a transgressor of their law, and a blasphemer against God. They tempt him, (but in vain,) by artifice, and by terror, to renounce his persuasion, and by apostasy to repel the charge. They call upon him to deny his Saviour, and to their infinite mortification they find him bearing the most decisive testimony to His power and Godhead—they bid him blaspheme his Lord, and they hear his rapturous declaration, that "Jesus sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and that He will come again in the clouds of heaven." Being thus disappointed of their purpose, they threw him headlong from the pinnacle of the Temple. The holy man, not killed by the fall, had strength sufficient left to rise on

his knees, and pray for his cruel enemies that sought his life; "I beseech thee," said he, "O LORD GOD, heavenly Father, "I beseech thee forgive them, for they know not what they do;" but, in the midst of his charitable intercession, his implacable adversaries completed their inhuman work, and stoned him to death; bringing, as the historian tells us, universal ruin on the Jewish nation by this atrocious instance of horrible barbarity.

The Epistle, addressed by St. *James* to the dispersed Jewish converts, is deservedly reckoned among the most instructive portions of the sacred volume. Its tendency is to guard us against those temptations, to which we are exposed in our passage through this state of trial; to recommend to all Christians the duties of active faith, unwearied patience, and extensive charity; to teach us the prudent govern-

government of the tongue; the necessity and excellence of spiritual wisdom; the injustice of respecting persons; the duty of prayer, and of entire submission to the will of God; a constant mindfulness of the uncertainty of human life, and the numberless advantages of a spirit of devotion. This most edifying Epistle cannot be too frequently read, or too attentively considered; abounding, as it does, with most useful precepts for the direction of our conduct.

Let us look up with reverence to these bright examples of Christian virtue; and particularly let us meditate on the divinely inspired writings of the latter. With *St. Philip* let us anxiously desire, that others may reap the benefit of those spiritual blessings, which the good Providence of God hath bestowed upon ourselves. With *St. James* let us labour to disperse the know-

lege of divine truth, and by our voice to teach others also. Let us be thankful to God, that we still may labour in this service without the immediate apprehension of danger; though we may be too frequently disappointed in our hopes of success. After the example of both these champions of the faith, let us strenuously profess the truth, whensoever the Providence of God calls us to bear our testimony in support of it: and since it is declared, that even in the most peaceful days, *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus,* and will persist in preaching a crucified Saviour to the vain and prejudiced votaries of the world, *must, in some degree or other, expect to suffer persecution,* let it be our study, whatever may be our provocations, and even if we should not be exempt from personal sufferings, to possess our souls in patience. Let us testify our

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charity towards those, who resist our endeavours to do them good: always bearing in our minds not only the meekness, the humility, and the long-suffering of these faithful ministers and followers of Jesus Christ, but, above all, the bright example of those virtues, exhibited in the character of the divine *Author and Finisher of our Faith*. He, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He was despised and rejected by those for the sake of whom He went about doing good, and for whom He afterwards condescended to die, He endured with patience, even unto the end, the contradiction of obdurate sinners; that so, having made a full atonement for our sins, and having made peace for us by the blood of His cross, He might reconcile us to our offended Father. Thus did He secure to all those, who walk in the *Way* which He hath pointed out to them—to all, who em-
brace,

brace, believe and obey the *Truth* which He hath taught them—to all, who are earnestly desirous of that eternal *Life* which He hath purchased for them, an inheritance of joy unspeakable in that heavenly kingdom, where, enthroned in transcendent glory, He liveth and reigneth for ever and ever, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,**

Now unto HIM who hath called us with an holy calling, and hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, unto Him, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, power, might, majesty, and dominion, world without end. AMEN.

place, believe and obey the Truth which
He hath taught them—to all, who are ear-
nestly desirous of that eternal Life which
He hath purchased for them, an inheri-
tance of joy unspokeable in that heavenly
kingdom, where, enthroned in transcend-
ent glory, He liveth and reigneth for ever
and ever, King of Kings, and Lord
of Lords.

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all honour, power, might, majesty, and do-
minion, world without end. AMEN.

SAINT BARNABAS.

SAINT BARNABAS

THE APOSTLE.

JUNE 11.

SAINT BARNABAS

2

SAINT BARNABAS

THE HOLY GHOST
AND THE APOSTLE.

I have called them.

In these words **JUN** have a remembrance
instance of the solemn designation of
two holy persons. (one of whom I have
commemorated on this day, for the
where to they were appointed by the
of God. The preparatory apostles
the prevalent disposition of the
from above: the actual ordination

SAINT BARNABAS.

Acts XIII. 2.

The Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them."

IN these words we have a remarkable instance of the solemn designation of two holy persons, (one of whom the Church commemorates on this day,) to the work whereto they were appointed by the Spirit of God. The preparatory impulses, and the prevalent dispositions of the heart, are from above; the actual ordination is the

work of man. Without the former, the steward of the mysteries of God will never labour worthily, piously, and zealously in his sacred office; without the latter, he cannot be duly and regularly *invested* with that office. Accordingly, the first step taken in the establishment of the Christian Church, was the very solemn consecration of St. Matthias to that ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell. On this occasion, there was an immediate address to the Searcher of hearts, imploring Him to point out by His own direction to their preference one of two persons, both of them, doubtless, fit candidates for that important charge. The lots were given forth; and the election fell upon Matthias.

In the case before us, it pleases God by divine inspiration to call upon them, not to make a choice from a greater number,

but

but specially to separate *Saul* and *Barnabas* for the purpose, to which He, that is, God the Holy Ghost, had called them, viz. to preach the Gospel, and to work miracles in confirmation and support of the doctrines which they taught. This was done in a manner peculiarly striking and impressive: "When they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." This conduct, adopted by persons, acting under the immediate influence of divine inspiration, may set before us the great impropriety of rushing into the sacred office of the ministry, as the manner of some is, without any true

* The number of the twelve Apostles had been already reduced by the martyrdom of St. James the Great, [Acts xiii. 2.] and possibly St. Barnabas might be appointed to fill up the vacancy thus occasioned in the Sacred College: while St. Paul had an especial and extraordinary apostolic commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

and

and legitimate authority; and the danger incurred by those who conceive themselves to be inwardly moved, and thereby consider the external separation or appointment of no value; that appointment, the importance of which is implicitly taught us by the Holy Ghost Himself, in the ordination of *Barnabas* and *Saul*.

Of the former of these Apostles, so delegated to their sacred work, it is my duty to speak on the present occasion: and it will appear, that *St. Barnabas* bore no inconsiderable share in the labour which accompanied the first plantation of the Gospel; in the promulgation of which, he exerted himself with the utmost zeal and assiduity, and to which he bore his testimony, even unto death. We are told, in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that *St. Barnabas* was of the country of Cyprus; that he was a Levite; that his real

name

name was *Joses*, or *Joseph**, but that he had received the name of *Barnabas*, which is, being interpreted, the Son of Consolation: on what occasion he was so called we do not exactly know; but we have several reasons for thinking, that this new name was given to him with great propriety: and it appears peculiarly descriptive of this Apostle's real temper and disposition. For, on referring to the ninth chapter of the history just mentioned, we find him encouraging, comforting, and recommending to his brethren's notice, a celebrated convert to Christianity, whom, having been a most active and zealous adversary, the Apostles were unwilling to receive: "For when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join him-

* See our observations on this subject at the note subjoined to p. 172; and the reasons there adduced in support of the conjecture, that *Barnabas*, and not *Judas*, surnamed *Barabas*, was St. Matthias's competitor for the apostolic office on the death of *Judas*.

self to the disciples. But they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple: till *Barnabas* took him and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them, how he had seen the LORD in the way, and that He had spoken unto him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." As a farther confirmation of the propriety of his being styled the Son of Consolation, we find, that on this Apostle's arrival at Antioch, when he saw the blessed influence of the grace of God on the minds of his hearers, "he was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the LORD: For," it is added, "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the LORD." He was intent on communicating to others the consolation which himself had derived from hav-

ing received the faith, and embraced the Gospel of Christ. Of his liberality and charity we read in a very early period after the constitution of the Christian Church, where it is said, that, "having land, he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet."

St. Barnabas was in this respect distinguished from his fellow-labourers in the work of the Gospel, that his parents were opulent, as well as pious; that he had been instructed (probably by the celebrated Gamaliel) in the Jewish law; in which situation it is supposed that he first became acquainted with St. Paul, with whom he laboured a whole year at Antioch in the establishment of the Christian Church. From this city he, together with St. Paul, was commissioned to carry relief to the brethren which were in Judea; when, being afflicted with a severe famine, they were reduced

reduced to the lowest state of necessity and extreme distress; With St. Paul also we find him employed in his native country, Cyprus, converting the governor, *Sergius Paulus*, notwithstanding the opposition of *Elymas* the forcerer, to the faith of Christ: who, seeing that the word spoken by them was accompanied with power, and that the forcerer, full of subtlety and mischief, was struck blind in an instant, was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord, and believed and obeyed the Gospel. That both these holy Apostles were of like passions with ordinary men, we find them declaring when the heathen priests at Lystra would have done sacrifice to them as to gods, on their having restored a cripple to the use of his limbs: and if we doubted it, we need only refer ourselves to that sharp contention between these once-united friends, which occasioned a separation between them, very
favourable

favourable indeed, as it eventually turned out, to the more speedy and diffusive propagation of the Gospel. Probably much might be said to justify the conduct of both Apostles on the occasion of dispute; St. Paul refused to take with them an associate, who had too much consulted his own ease and safety on a former occasion; while *St. Barnabas*, accounting him nevertheless to be profitable to him for the ministry, determined to take him, when he sailed from Antioch to his native country. Here, it is supposed, this Apostle spent the remainder of his days; and at Salamis, it is recorded, that he received the crown of martyrdom. The Jews from Syria accused him of blasphemy against the law of Moses; seized him in the midst of his pious exhortations; and at night, for fear of the people, brought him forth, cruelly tormented him, and then stoned him to death,

death. Thus ended the useful, honourable course which this Apostle was ordained to run, and for which, as the Holy Ghost commanded in the text, he had been separated by a solemn appointment.

When we view the activity with which he laboured, the dangers which he overcame, and the cruel death which he voluntarily encountered, we have strong encouragement to continue steadfast in our profession of that Gospel, to the observance of which, in this our happier country, no sufferings are threatened, no danger is annexed; but where, on the contrary, the duties and the virtues which our Religion prescribes, are recommended and encouraged by the highest example and authority. The readiness of this Apostle to pass over the weakness of an offending brother, whose zeal had not risen to the same height with his own, and that of his most eminent col-

league

league St. Paul, affords us a very useful lesson, and teaches us to compassionate the infirmities of others; and not altogether to reject from our favour and regard those, who perhaps are equally sincere with ourselves, without equal fortitude and powers of exertion. If we view the munificence of St. *Barnabas*, in selling his lands for the relief of the poor, in its true light, we shall be animated by his example to a general performance of the great duty of charity; without feeling ourselves called upon, according to the strict letter of primitive Christianity, to imitate that conduct, which the urgency of the moment rendered a necessary act of pious benevolence; namely, to sell all that we have, and distribute it among the poor. To *this* severe test the rich man's faith in the Gospel was purposely called by our Lord; but the case was special. The Searcher of hearts

well knew his fond attachment to his riches; and therefore resolved, not merely to convince him of his evil propensity, but also to exhibit to his disciples a striking example of the truth of his own doctrine, that we cannot serve God and Mahommon; that two masters, issuing contradictory commands, never can be obeyed; and that when riches and earthly possessions are considered as our treasure, to these will our hearts and affections be exclusively attached. In the mean time, it is without dispute our bounden duty, at all times and upon all occasions, readily to contribute to the relief of our suffering fellow-christians; and when their necessities are urgent, rather to deny ourselves, and to disregard our own indulgence, and even our convenience, than suffer others to sigh under those burthens, which we might thus have it in our power to alleviate. Our liberality

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to the poor then partakes of the nature of a *sacrifice*; and we are assured, that it is an offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing unto God.

There is no reason to conclude, that the difference of opinion between the Apostle of this day and his colleague St. Paul, led either of them to uncharitable censures of each other; nor to any animosity disgraceful to the Christian character: and I have already observed to you, that eventually it was productive of more extensive benefit to the cause of Religion. We must not, however, take occasion from hence to vindicate a spirit of contention, of discord, or of angry strife, unjustifiable on any occasion, and particularly so when we speak of the Gospel of Peace. Evil must not be encouraged, that good may come; on the contrary, we must avoid as much as possible all controversy and causeless dispute;

putation, and, as much as in us lies, must live peaceably with all men. We must engage in no matter of litigation with rancorous bitterness, nor pursue it from motives of revenge; but rather abate something of our legal demands and just rights, than prosecute them to their utmost extent, at the hazard of peace, and in violation of Christian charity. Above all, if religious differences arise, we must abstain from intemperate zeal in the maintenance of our opinions, even although we may be persuaded that they are founded in truth, and strictly conformable to the word of God. We are taught to pity those who err and are deceived, and to pray, that it would please God to bring them into the way of truth. But we are no where authorized to treat them with scorn and contempt, to use injurious language, or to detract from that merit

merit which really belongs to them. In a word, we are never to suffer our zeal to transgress the bounds of charity; never to "let our good," through any indiscretion or intemperance on our part, "be evil spoken of;" but, by gentleness and meekness, humility and charity, we are directed to adorn the doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all things, and whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of GOD:

To whom, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

mean which really belongs to them. In a word, we are never to suffer our zeal to transgress the bounds of charity; nor to "let our good," through any indiscretion or intemperance on our part, "be evilspoken of;" but, by gentleness and meekness, humility and civility, we are directed to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.

Ye whom Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be desired, as it hath been, all honour and glory, and praise, world without end.

Amen.

THE
NATIVITY
OF
SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST.

JUNE 24.

NATIVITY

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST.

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THE
NATIVITY
OF
SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST.

ISAIAH XL. 3.

The voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make strait in the desert a highway for our God."

IT is scarcely necessary to remind you, that the person here spoken of by the Prophet, in these words, is the Saint whom we commemorate this day: and it is remarkable, that whilst we call to remembrance the confident perseverance of other saints and blessed martyrs even unto death, and view them in their last act of glorifying

ing God, by sealing their testimony with their blood, we celebrate on this occasion the Birth-day* of the illustrious forerunner of Jesus Christ; than whom, (we have the highest authority for asserting) a greater never arose among them that were born of women: of whom the Discerner of the heart declared, that he was "more than a prophet"—and of whom the voice of inspiration uttered those memorable words, "Behold I send my MESSENGER before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

The birth of St. *John Baptist* was foretold by an Angel, at a time when, in the ordinary course of nature, such an event was impossible; yet it came to pass as it had been predicted. It was attended with several portentous circumstances. An Angel of God appeared to his father Zacharias as he ministered in the Temple, and solemnly

* See p. 134. modis vobis habet

proclaimed to him the miraculous birth, the high office, the sacred character of a son, whom his wife Elifabeth should bear to him. In just punishment for the priest's unbelief, his voice was taken away for a season, till there was a full accomplishment of those things which had been foretold him by the LORD. Then was his tongue loosed, and in a song of praise he blessed the LORD GOD of Israel, who had visited and redeemed His people. Great joy filled the hearts of those who expected the Messiah, and who believed in the prophecies, which had foretold, that one should appear to announce His arrival; one, whose office it should be to turn many of the children of Israel to the LORD, and to prepare them for the reception of the Redeemer of mankind.

The text describes him as having already entered on his mission; and we will now attend him in the discharge of his important

important duty, preaching in the wilderness to the assembled multitudes who followed him. In this extraordinary situation, we know not whether more to admire the innocence of his life, the purity of his manners, the simplicity of his habit, or the importance of his doctrine. The first six verses of the third chapter of St. Matthew give you the whole of his character and conduct, as to the nature of his commission, and the great business on which he was sent forth. *In those days*, (i. e. while Christ dwelt at Nazareth, as related in the last verse of the preceding chapter, though nearly thirty years after the events recorded in other parts of the same chapter) *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea*, (and, as St. Mark tells us, in all the country about Jordan) *saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. For this is He* (applying the prophecy to himself; as though he had said,

said, "I am He") *that was spoken of by the Prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make His paths straight." And the same John had his raiment of camels' hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts.**

* The locust, (as the learned Bochart hath shewn by a cloud of witnesses,) was commonly eaten both in ancient and modern times by many nations of Asia and Africa, and several species of it were permitted to be eaten by the divine law, Lev. xi. 21, 22. whence we may conclude that they were an usual article of food in Judea. See Parkhurst's Heb. Lexicon in v. *חגב*, iv, and his Gr. Lexicon in v. *ἀγρίς*, 3 Ed.

Mr. Harmer, in his ingenious "Illustrations of the Holy Scripture from the customs now existing in the Eastern countries," speaks of the locust as an accustomed article of food among the Arabians—who are stated, on the authority of Niebuhr, to dry, and keep them for winter provision. Vol. IV. Obs. cxlvi. Note 3.

We learn also from Sir John Chardin, that the modern Dervises wear a garment made of the woolly hair of camels; that they wear leathern girdles, and do also feed on locusts. (On the subject of the prophetic habit, see Zech. xiii. 4.)

and

and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan; and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. The kingdom of Christ, foretold by the Prophet Daniel (Chap. ii. and viii.) as the kingdom of the God of Heaven, was now about to be erected and established, which was finally to be victorious over all other kingdoms. It was therefore of the highest importance, that men should be instructed in those duties, which would render them capable of being received into that celestial kingdom; and inasmuch as true faith and sincere repentance are the only grounds of preparation for that supreme privilege, we find the Baptist exhorting them, in the very words which the divine Instructor of mankind afterwards condescended to adopt, to repent of all the past irregularities of their conduct, and to be washed and cleansed by

Baptism

Baptism from the defilements of sin. This was indeed an exact accomplishment of that prediction of the Prophet Malachi; who speaks of St. John's coming, under the name and character of Elijah the Prophet, and who describes him as the Messenger of peace and love: "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers:" his preaching shall bring back the degenerate children of Israel to the true faith and piety of their ancestors; and they shall be acknowledged as the lawful posterity, the legitimate offspring of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The resemblance between St. John and the Prophet Elijah was so great as to justify the application of the prophecy to him, who, though he bore a different appellation, certainly came in the *spirit* and

and power of Eliās. Their characters ran parallel with each other in almost every particular. They were both intent on working a general reformation in the minds of their hearers. The abstinence, the retirement, and even the dress of both were peculiar and alike. Their opposition to the prevailing vices and corruptions of the times was the same. In the manner of their departure from the world they indeed differed materially from each other; but He who called his servant of old, in a public, visible manner, to the immediate participation of glory, appointed the second Elijah to ascend likewise into heaven by the triumphal chariot of martyrdom.

We wonder not to find, that such an holy life commanded general respect, and that his powerful exhortations engaged universal attention. His doctrine was accompanied with

with unprecedented success, and almost the whole nation of the Jews resorted to him, confessing their sins. And yet we find no soothing speeches, no false colourings of vice, no temporizing flattery, no mean disposition to connive at wickedness. His maxim was impartially to condemn vice, wheresoever he found it: and to recommend an immediate return to virtue, and a strict adherence to duty, in all orders and degrees of men. In the chapter of St. Matthew already referred to, he spares not either the open profaneness of the Sadducees, or the secret wickedness of the Pharisees; for many of both these sects came, (either out of curiosity, or a mere empty show of religion, or perhaps from still more unworthy motives,) to be present at his baptism. "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Ye, who

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have

have poisoned all around you with your corrupt principles and practices, what hath induced you to assume, even for a moment, the appearance of humility and repentance? Grievously are ye mistaken, if ye rely on your descent from the holy Patriarch Abraham for acceptance with God, while ye neither possess the faith, nor manifest the obedience of Abraham to the divine commands. In vain do ye boast that ye are the seed of him to whom the promise was given, whilst ye continue in the violation of that holy covenant, which subsisted between God and your Ancestor. The Almighty will sooner "make a new thing," and from the stones of the earth raise up children unto Abraham, and appoint them to be the heirs of his faith and obedience, than he will admit those to the blessings of His kingdom, who rest merely in outward privileges and lifeless ceremonies, without

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the least regard to internal holiness, and the unspotted purity of the soul.

Such was the general tendency of St. John's discourses—such were the admonitions of this holy Instructor to such as came not in sincerity of heart to his baptism. The singularity in his mode of life, the boldness in his manner of preaching, and withal the excellence of his doctrine, drew around him a great multitude of hearers, whom he received, by a significant outward ceremony*, into the covenant of grace, and regeneration. But his character of BAPTIST was then fully established, when he was admitted to the di-

* The rite of Baptism as administered by St. John was new in its *application*, but was by no means a novel practice among the Jews. In confirmation of this assertion we shall refer our readers to the following texts, among many others that might be adduced—Lev. xiii. 58. xiv. 8, 9. xvii. 16, &c. Numb. viii. 7. 2 Kings iii. 11. v. 14. Mark viii. 4. Heb. ix. 10. See also the apocryphal book of Tobit, Chap. ii. 5. vi. 2.

stinguished honour of baptizing his Saviour; an office which at first he with humble diffidence declined; but in the performance of which, a voice from Heaven pronounced the Redeemer of the world to be "the beloved Son of God, in whom He was well pleased."

Many other passages in the life of this Saint of God are such as to arrest our attention in a very forcible manner; particularly, when we behold the exemplary Reformer of vice, exchanging his abode in the wilderness for the palace of a licentious prince. There we find him reproving Herod for his adultery and incest, with the same undaunted freedom, with which he had brought the proud Pharisees and Sadducees to shame, for their superstition and hypocrisy. He plainly told the king, that the law of God forbade his evil practices, and alarmed him with denunciations

nunciations of the divine vengeance. This declaration, added to Herod's apprehension of the Baptist's popularity, drew upon him the resentment of that jealous prince, (who for a while had heard him with satisfaction, and had treated him with reverence,) and he immediately formed in his mind the determination to cut him off. An opportunity soon occurred of making the blameless man a victim to the tyrant's rage, and to the malice of Herodias; whose daughter's skill in dancing, at an intemperate debauch of Herod and his lords, was to be rewarded with half his kingdom, if required; and which obtained for its recompence a still greater boon—the sacrifice of a life more precious than the *whole* of Herod's kingdom. The history presents us with a curious, but most disgusting, spectacle; a royal princess, in her tender years, accessory to a murder of the

most atrocious kind, delivering to her relentless mother, "the adulterers who hunted for the precious life," the head of this holy Prophet, mangled and reeking with blood. Alas, who knoweth to what strange excesses sin in its progress will conduct its votaries? There seemed no connection in the beginning between the incontinence of Herodias, and the murder of this Saint: and yet her sin produced in her that hardness of heart, which led to this horrible instance of sacrilegious barbarity. Of all sin we may say, what Solomon says of strife; "the beginning thereof is as when one letteth out water:" we know not what direction it will take; and when it has gained strength in its precipitate course, we know not by what means its progress can be stopped. Beware therefore of the beginnings of sin, and adhere with pure devotion to the service, and with inviolable

able obedience to the commandments, of
GOD.

The fate of the blessed Martyr in consequence of his well-directed reproof must not deter us from the performance of this friendly, this charitable duty. That it is necessary for persons, under particular situations and circumstances, to discharge it, is most certain. In parents, in masters, in magistrates, and in ministers of the Gospel, connivance at vice is a crime, and silence is encouragement. To abstain from reproof is to allow, and to make ourselves accomplices in the transgression. In the intercourse betwixt friends, it is an act of extreme *unkindness*, to say the least of it, not to point out that misconduct which ought to be amended—those evil propensities which the sinner, as he values the salvation of his immortal soul, must correct and reform. We know, and

too often we experience, how difficult it is to discharge this friendly office without incurring the displeasure of those whom we are desirous to serve. The pride of man can ill endure to be reminded of his faults; and the reprover is in danger of hearing from the lips of such as he is most solicitous to profit, "Art thou he that troubleth us with thine ill-directed censures?" Yet is it our duty, and that a very important part of it—a duty from which we must not shrink, if we would save ourselves, and those that hear us, to shew to such as are committed to our charge the nature and the consequences of sin; and that, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. And while by our voice we bear courageous testimony to truth and virtue, we have it in our power, silently, but forcibly, to give strength and efficacy to our admonitions, by religiously abstaining from
such

such instances of negligence or positive transgression in our own conduct, as we reprove in that of others. We must always remember, that the servant of God, though he is called on to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all authority, is nevertheless directed "not to strive:" his admonitions must be the faithful wounds of friendship, into which Charity is ready to pour her lenient balm; they must be delivered with love, and in the spirit of meekness; and every token must be given of courtesy and affection, in order to convince the party reproved, that we aim not so much at the offender, as at the offence.

I cannot sum up what has been said on this occasion in a more proper and forcible manner, than in the admirably edifying words suggested by the Collect for this day; wherein we are taught to offer up our prayers to the throne of grace, that, in

conformity to the *instructions* of the illustrious Saint before us, we may truly repent according to his preaching; and, in imitation of his *example*, may constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; that so, however our work of faith and our efforts of charity may be received among men, we may find a gracious acceptance with the God of glory, in the great and terrible day of our Lord Jesus Christ:

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, Three Persons and One GOD, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, glory, adoration, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

SAINT PETER

THE APOSTLE.

JUNE 29.

SAINT PETER

THE APOSTLE

SAINT PETER.

St. MARK XIV. 72.

— *And when he thought thereon, he wept.*

THE character of St. Peter in the New Testament, like that of the son of Jesse in the Old, is calculated to furnish some of the most useful admonitions that the human mind is capable of receiving: each of them proclaims, in terms that demand our most serious attention, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!* When we dwell on the temporary defection of these Saints of God, we consider each of them as standing, like a beacon, to guard us against the danger of self-

self-confidence. They give comfort to the penitent, and warning to the secure. They teach mankind, that none, while on earth, are fixed so steadfastly, as to preclude the possibility of their falling; and that should they fall, true repentance, and the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, will restore them to the privileges they had forfeited by transgression.

When we are told, that in the moment, in which the backsliding Apostle disowned all connection with his blessed Master, and confirmed the falsehood with curses and imprecations, the LORD *turned, and looked upon Peter*, what may we not suppose to be passing in the mind of his compassionate Master? what may we not conjecture to have been the sensations of this unhappy disciple? It was a look that melted his heart, and caused streams of true contrition to flow from his eyes: “when he
thought

thought thereon, he wept:" yea, he went out, and wept bitterly. That look of blended pity and concern produced immediate reflection on the horrible nature of his crime; and we cannot wonder, that reflection was instantaneously succeeded by the bitterness of penitential sorrow.

Before we proceed farther in the consideration of the instructions to be drawn from the character and conduct of St. Peter, it will be necessary that we give some short account of this very eminent Apostle. We are told, that he was a Galilean, and born at *Bethsaida*; that the name originally given him, on his admission into the Jewish Church by circumcision, was *Simon*, or, as he is sometimes called, *Simeon*. To this name was added by our Saviour that of *Cephas*, which signifies a *stone*; expressed by the Greek word *Peter*; either with reference to his natural firmness and constancy,

stancy, (though, in the instance just referred to, he so miserably fell away from his own steadfastness,) or else, by anticipation, applied to that solemn charge, which he afterwards received, when he professed his faith in Christ Jesus, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world; that *Rock*, upon which the Christian Church was to be built, and against which not even *the gates of hell* should ever be suffered to prevail*.

The disciples which were called from the neighbourhood of the sea of Galilee were chiefly fishermen; and this great and zealous Apostle was in no respect exalted above his fellow-labourers, either in his

* There can be no doubt that the Confession of the Truth, and not the Person who made it, is the Rock on which Christianity was to be founded. St. Peter himself claimed no preeminence of the kind, nor did he arrogate any distinctions and privileges to himself in consequence of his Lord and Master's declaration.

situation in life, or in the discharge of his pastoral office. Of him it may with truth be spoken, as of almost all the rest of the Apostles, that God was pleased to chuse the *unlearned of this world to confound the wise, and the weak and despised of this world to confound the mighty, that the faith of such as accepted and embraced the gospel might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.*

Of the superiority of this Apostle in respect to any prerogative of person or office, we know nothing; nothing, at least, that can induce us to consider him as the universal Head and supreme governor of the Church of Christ. To a certain degree of pre-eminence in his own order, we may reasonably suppose him to have been entitled by his age and gravity: perhaps also the zeal and alacrity which led him on all occasions to be most forward in exertion,

might have induced his brethren, with great propriety, to concede to St. *Peter* a more active part in the management of the infant Church: but in no respect do we find him invested with any exclusive power or paramount authority whatsoever: the Christian faith, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, is built on the *foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone*, with no particular mention of any other supremacy.

In our remarks on the Festival of St. Andrew we observed, that it was in consequence of his brother's communication of the joyful news of the *Messiah*, that St. Peter, with that eagerness and zeal which so distinguish his character, hastened to converse with Him. But it was not before he witnessed our Saviour's transcendent power, displayed in the miracle immediately connected with our Apostle's profession,

feſſion, that he became His avowed diſ-
 ciple, left all his former purſuits, and fol-
 lowed Him. From this time we find St.
Peter honoured with a particular intro-
 duction to the moſt ſtriking and intereſt-
 ing ſcenes of his Maſter's life. He became
 the witneſs of His tranſfiguration on mount
 Tabor; of His abſolute dominion over the
 waves of the ſea, and the raging of the
 winds; and even of His authority over
 death itſelf, in reſtoring the daughter of
 the ruler of the ſynagogue to life, and vi-
 gour, and activity.

We behold him moſt forward to declare
 his confidence in our Saviour's almighty
 power, though unable to maintain that con-
 fidence in the moment of perſonal danger:

“ LORD, if it be Thou, bid me come unto

“ Thee on the water.” There ſpake the
 ardour of affection, regardless of conſe-
 quences, and only ſeeking to approach the

Lord of Life: but when he made the dangerous experiment, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "LORD, *save me!*" He found that zeal itself, when not according to knowledge, may be essentially defective, particularly when it is put off its guard, and embarrassed by unforeseen difficulties.

Of the very same nature was the transaction, to which the text alludes. Confiding in his strength to confess his persecuted Master before his enemies, he was anxious for admittance into the hall of Caiaphas. Had we only been informed, that the very follower of our LORD who had been most active in His defence—he who had even drawn his sword in the attempt to rescue Him from His enemies, and had actually wounded one of the barbarous aggressors—had we, I say, been told, that the very same Apostle had gone in the same night to the high priest's house, whither his Lord had
been

been conveyed, braving every danger out of anxiety for His fate, we should have extolled his faith, and admired his intrepidity. And by sentiments like these he was doubtless actuated, when he entered the threshold of the priest: but, too secure of standing, he took not heed, and suddenly he fell. An unexpected question from one of the female attendants first alarmed, and then prevailed against him; so grievous indeed was his defection, that when his fidelity was to be declared with some probability of hazard, not a simple denial only was the consequence, but a denial accompanied with oaths and protestations, tending most heinously to aggravate his guilt.

Let us now accompany this Saint, recovered from his fall, and full of pious solicitude to make amends for his error, and to proceed with additional zeal and energy in the path, which was to lead

him through sufferings to eternal glory. The first instance, in which he distinguished himself, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, was by converting *three thousand souls* at one time to the Christian faith: so rapidly did the gospel advance, and so mightily did it prevail through the influence of the Spirit of Truth, and the blessing vouchsafed by Him to the words this Apostle uttered, as the oracles of God. We soon after behold two notorious offenders, after his awful reproof, falling dead at his feet: wretched self-deceivers, who had kept back, through covetousness, what had been consecrated to God; and who had endeavoured to cover their sacrilege with deliberate falsehood. On the other hand we see him establishing, comforting, and supporting such as were newly converted to the Christian faith. And we find God Almighty Himself vouchsafing,

saving, by an extraordinary vision, to remove from his mind those deep-rooted prejudices, which, if suffered to remain, would only have served to check his exertions, and would have led him to confine his labours to the Jews alone. Whereas it was the will of God, that the door of salvation should be opened to the Gentiles; and that St. Peter, though the gospel of the Circumcision was especially committed to his care, should, in that wonderful manner, be convinced, that God, whose mercy is, over all His works, *is no respecter of persons; but that, in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.*

The same God, who made him the powerful instrument of His mercy, forsook him not, when called on to suffer for his zeal in promoting the interests of Christ's kingdom. By the command of

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Herod

Herod he is bound with chains, strictly guarded by soldiers, and sentenced to a painful and violent death on the following day. By the Providence of God he is loosed from those chains, delivered from the soldiers, and the gates of the prison open themselves of their own accord to release a captive, whom not all the powers on earth could at that time any longer detain. But this, you will observe, was not an *absolute deliverance*: it was only a prolongation of his useful life, till the work was finished which he was sent to perform; it was but a respite from that honourable death, by which this Apostle, together with his brethren and fellow-sufferers, was to obtain the crown of martyrdom. For in the general persecution of the Christians at Rome in the reign of Nero, St. Peter, (who had, by his successful labours, particularly become the
object

object of that tyrant's resentment, and who had given some check to his licentious gratifications,) was carried forth to crucifixion, and, by his own desire, under circumstances more humiliating, than the usual manner in which that cruel punishment was inflicted. He was crucified *with his head downwards*, and was afterwards buried in the spot, whereon is erected that Church, distinguished by his name, than which, excepting the Temple of Solomon, the world never beheld so splendid and majestic an edifice.

The Church is indebted to this holy Apostle for two catholic Epistles, in which the Jewish converts to Christianity, wherever dispersed, are addressed with peculiar earnestness, and in a style very characteristic of their inspired author. His obvious design is to comply with the admonition contained in those words of his Blessed Master,

Master, who, in His address to His disciples, while He tells them all, that *Satan had desired to have them, that he might sift them as wheat*; faith to Peter in particular, "*I have prayed for THEE, that THY faith fail not*;" that is, may not utterly fail thee: adding, "*and thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*" St. Peter exhorts his converts to a patient submission to civil authority, even under the most severe trials; and particularly encourages them to persist in their duty, and not to fall from their own steadfastness. Every word seems to bear imprinted, in indelible characters, his remembrance of all the circumstances of his own temporary apostasy.

There is no feature in the history of this Apostle more striking, than that fervent zeal which accompanied the profession of his faith. On all occasions we find him ardent and eager to testify the sentiments
whereof

whereof his heart was full towards his Blessed LORD and Master. In whom do we discover such attachment, such professions of fidelity, such reliance on his own strength? In whom, alas! do we find such weakness and timidity, such abject irresolution, in the moment of difficulty and danger? Where now are all those protestations, "*Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended!*" "*Though I should die with thee, yet will not I deny thee!*" LORD, I am ready to go with thee to prison, or to death! I will lay down my life for thy sake!" Where is all this confidence, when he is charged with being one of the companions of the persecuted Jesus, then under trial in the judgment-hall? "I know not the man:"—"I know not him of whom ye speak:"—"I solemnly protest I never knew him." O let us not be high-minded, but let us fear! This holy
Apostle

Apostle was suffered to fall away for a season, that no one ever afterwards might presume on his own strength: and he was enabled to recover himself, that no one, having fallen, might ever add one sin to another, by abandoning himself to utter despair. We behold him, like an half-vanquished hero, (whom the overpowering vehemence of the adversary had for a moment compelled to desist from the combat,) returning to the charge with redoubled vigour, and renewing the conflict under a fixed determination to conquer or to die. By his own presumption he had fallen from his integrity; by the grace of God he was restored, and enabled to stand. Let us profit by every particular of the case before us. Much as we may learn from the example, much as we may learn from the precepts of this man of God, perhaps still more important instruction
may

may be obtained from his fall. There we see exemplified the weakness of human nature, whenever for good reasons it pleases God to withdraw his preventing and assisting grace: we see, that though, under the divine guidance, we can do all things, yet, without it, we are able to do nothing that is good: we see, that to rely on our own strength is the very extreme of weakness; to depend on our own wisdom, the very foolishness of folly: and, lastly, that though it is grievous to provoke God, it is yet more grievous to be insensible of our fault. This was not the case with the blessed Saint, whose penitential tears flowed in such abundance, as to quench the wrath of the Almighty, and, by the merits of his Saviour, to obtain his restoration to heavenly mercy. Alas! we provoke, but we do not repent. Too often, either through fear of imagined danger, or hope of delusive pleasure, we do,
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in our actions, at least, if not in words, deny our LORD. On such occasions His eye, though unseen, is upon us, as it was in this case upon His offending, but much-loved, disciple. O that our hearts, like his, were so sensible of the divine goodness, as to melt at the affecting remembrance! The grace of GOD is ever sufficient for us, if by our own obduracy we defeat not its salutary operations. That grace will strengthen them that stand; will comfort and help the weak-hearted; will raise up them that fall; and finally will beat down Satan under our feet. That grace supplied the Apostle of this day with sufficient courage, on a future occasion, to acknowledge his divine Master, at the immediate peril of his life; to strive with unshaken constancy for the high prize of his calling; and thus to obtain the inestimable blessing, which shall be the portion of all who confess

fess a crucified Saviour before men; that of being themselves hereafter confessed, acknowledged, and accepted by their REDEEMER and JUDGE, in that day, when He shall come in the glory of the Father and of the holy Angels, to render unto every man according to his works.

Now to GOD the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, Three Persons, and One GOD, be all honour, and glory, and praise, henceforth and for evermore. AMEN.

and a crucified Saviour before men; that
 of being themselves hereafter con-
 sidered, and accepted by their Re-
 deemer and Judge, in that day, when
 He shall come in the glory of the Father
 and of the holy Angels, to render unto
 every man according to his works.

Now is God the Father, the Son, and
 the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, and One
 God, be all honour, and glory, and praise,
 forever and ever. AMEN.

SAINT JAMES

THE APOSTLE.

JULY 25.

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SAINT JAMES

THE APOSTLE

JULY 27

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SAINT JAMES.

St. MARK I. 20, 21.

*And when He had gone a little farther thence,
He saw James the son of Zebedee, and
John his brother, who also were in the
ship, mending their nets: and straightway
He called them. And they left their fa-
ther Zebedee in the ship with the hired
servants, and went after Him.*

GOD, in His infinite mercy, meets us
with His blessings at such times and
places, and in such situations, as to His
own unfathomable wisdom seems most ex-
pedient. Here He finds a number of hon-
est, industrious fishermen, diligently em-
ployed in the duties of their calling; and
in a fit disposition to receive His invitation

to an employment of a nature very different from, and superior to, that in which they were engaged. He therefore deems them worthy to publish the Gospel of salvation to the world, and to become, as our Saviour Himself expresses it, *fishers of men*. He finds no reluctance in them to obey His call, although He offers them no allurement of ease, no splendour of wealth, no manner of earthly gratification. By His powerful influence on their hearts, He inclines them to prefer, before every other consideration, the advancement of His Gospel, the interests of His spiritual kingdom, and the welfare of the souls of men.

Among the happy number thus chosen by our Saviour to be the instruments of conveying the light of the Gospel to the world, was *James* the son of *Zebedee*, surnamed *the Great*. He received that appellation, either because he differed in point of age, or perhaps of stature, from
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the other holy Apostle of the same name; or else because he was the first of that glorious company, who followed his Blessed Master in death, that he might receive the crown of life. As the proto-martyr among the Apostles, the illustrious title in question seems to belong to him with peculiar propriety; though some have assigned it to the distinction with which he was honoured (together with St. Peter and St. John) by his divine Master, in being admitted to those manifestations of his power, and those mysterious transactions of his life, which were for a time to be concealed from the rest of mankind. He was of the same kindred and family with the mother of our Blessed Lord*; though in what degree of relationship is not exactly stated.

* So also was the other Apostle of the same name; the title in question must therefore be traced to some other source. See p. 216.

Not that this circumstance (however honourable to our Apostle it might be considered by his brethren) gave him any preference in His sight, who is "no respecter of persons;" on the contrary, He on all occasions declared, for the encouragement of every member of His mystical body, that "whosoever will do the will of His Father which is in heaven," the same He will consider in the tender relation of "a brother, or sister, or mother." When we consider the particular situation in which St. James was found, when he was called to be a disciple, we cannot but admire his readiness to obey the divine injunction. He is attending on his aged father, and assisting him in the necessary business of his honest but laborious profession. On another occasion we hear the plea of, "LORD, let me first go and bury my

my father." Would it have been very *wonderful*, would it, we may even venture to ask, have been very *culpable*, if St. James had urged the age and infirmities of his parent, and the service he might afford him, by continuing to lessen the toil of his profession, and share in his labours? But his conduct exhibited a stronger instance of that faith, which brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ: we see him cheerfully submitting all earthly concerns to the supreme disposal and government of divine Providence; as knowing, that we are then more peculiarly the objects of God's favour and protection, when we "cast all our care upon Him that careth for us."

I have, however, formerly observed to you, that such examples do not call for our exact and scrupulous imitation under the present circumstances of society, and

under the laws by which it now pleases God to direct the affairs of this life. Extraordinary cases and circumstances demanded extraordinary conduct. Though Abraham was called on to bind his son as a victim on the altar, and the son of Zebedee to separate himself from his aged parent, still a disregard of the ties of nature and affection, a renunciation of our honest employment, and a departure from that situation wherein the Providence of God hath placed us, are by no means part of *our* Christian duty. On the contrary, the Apostle's advice is, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he is called, with God:" that is, in whatever profession any of you is placed, therein let him continue, but always with God, and in His fear and love: and conducting its concerns with such diligence, integrity, and moderation, as serve to shew, that the
Christian's

Christian's most important object is to secure the favour and acceptance of God. Affect not to change, with restless impatience, the situation to which you are called, provided it demands nothing from you, inconsistent with the dictates of an upright conscience, or incompatible with the performance of the greatest and most essential duties. There is generally more reason to expect the divine comfort and blessing in that calling, in which the hand of an all-wise Providence hath placed us, than in one, which is the result of our own wayward choice, of our own capricious preference. Here, doubtless, the case was special, and was certainly warranted by a clear and evident direction from above: the word of Christ was accompanied with power; and every consideration of relative duty might reasonably and properly be made to yield to a command so powerful,

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so obligatory, and so indispensable. It was therefore an act of duty on this special occasion, and under these particular circumstances, for the Apostle to resign the care of his father, (whom God would, as he hoped, preserve and protect,) and to follow Christ without delay. And if we may form our judgment of this holy Saint's disposition to discharge his new and important trust, from the * name assigned to him and his brother St. John by the divine Searcher of the human heart, we may conclude, that there was no want of energy and zeal, no want of spirit or vehemence in either of these "Sons of Thunder." The expression seems to imply, that their word was more than ordinarily powerful; while it has some reference, perhaps, to their natural disposition. This constitutional fervour, of which we speak, manifested itself decidedly on a

* Boanerges.

particular

particular occasion; when they felt an injury and affront offered to their divine Master so sensibly, as to be carried beyond all the bounds of charity, and to bring upon themselves a merited rebuke from the Author of benevolence and love. These sons of Zebedee, carried away by their resentment, desire to be permitted to call down fire from heaven to destroy those Samaritans, who refused to receive their Master. Our LORD's reply is every way consistent with His general character of meekness, forbearance, and long-suffering: "Ye know
" not what spirit ye are of: the Son of
" Man is not come to destroy mens' lives,
" but to save them." To save them by the introduction and establishment of a religion, the grand object of which is to secure the peace and security of the present life, and to promote the eternal salvation of its true professors.

The

The forwardness of these Apostles is also shewn, in their venturing to solicit a station of the highest preëminence in their Master's kingdom; which, at the moment of their making the request, they concluded would after a certain time be established *upon earth*. They employ their mother to bring forward their ambitious request. Our Blessed LORD immediately turns their thoughts to very different contemplations. He tells them that they knew not what they asked: that they were altogether ignorant of the spiritual nature of their Master's kingdom. And they seem to be as little aware at that time of the steps which would be necessary to lead them to it. "Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with," which is generally interpreted to be a baptism of sufferings, "and can ye drink of that cup," meaning a cup of bitterness

terness and sorrow, "which I am appointed to drink of?" They confidently affirmed that they were able. And the future events of their lives confirmed this truth, that whatever those expressions might mean, they were ready and willing to go to prison and to death for His sake: but as for a place at their Master's right hand, and at His left, this, He tells them, was not within His dispensation, in that humble character, in which they then beheld Him; nor would it be dispensed to any, except those for whom it was prepared by His Father; and who should be fitted by the disposition of their souls to receive it. Our blessed Saviour, who evidently suffered no opportunity to pass by Him, of improving every incident from which an useful lesson might be derived, from the circumstance of this presumptuous application leaves on their minds some instruc-

tions of the utmost consequence, respecting the virtue of humility: and His argument, drawn from His own personal character and conduct, is urged with a force which nothing could resist: If I, the Son of Man, who am also the Son of God, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a ransom for many, let my disciples, who aspire to superiority above their brethren, learn, that the path which leads to it, is through acts of more than ordinary condescension and humility. "Who-soever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

Of one of these "Sons of Thunder" I cannot avoid observing, by the way, in what a very extraordinary manner the grace of God had softened the fierceness of his disposition by its benign and gentle influence. His inestimable Epistles, addressed to the Christian

Christian Church at large, whilst they are replete with the most excellent precepts for the regulation of mens' lives and manners, are more particularly distinguished by a vein of Christian meekness, gentleness, and charity, demonstrating a sweetness of temper and character; entirely divested of that resentment, or of that ambition, which marked the earlier part of his conduct.

Of the labours of the Apostle whom we now commemorate we have no certain account, except that his ministry was chiefly exercised in Judea and its neighbourhood. In St. Luke's short history of the Acts of the Apostles, we are told, that this holy and faithful servant of God fell a victim to the love of popularity in that monster Herod, who, upon his entrance on his government, being desirous at any rate to procure the favour of the people, "stretched

out his hands to vex certain of the Church;" and, actuated by these base and barbarous motives, "killed James the brother of John with the sword." From historical tradition we learn, that he was apprehended, as he ministered at Jerusalem, and was beheaded; having, as we observed, the honour to be the first of the twelve disciples, who received the crown of martyrdom, for the testimony of his Blessed Master. We are farther informed, that such was the firmness and the fortitude with which he conducted himself at his trial, that his accuser, abashed and confounded, not only withdrew his charge, but fell at the Apostle's feet, and implored his forgiveness: then, declaring himself a convert to a Religion, capable of administering such support in a moment of severest trial, he yielded himself up to the same honourable death, and shed his blood at the same time with the venerable Saint

of God whom he had been the means of bringing to his martyrdom.

What an illustrious example is here afforded us of the beneficial effects of holding fast our confidence even unto the end of our lives! Here it not only carries the holy Martyr himself with comfort and with joy through his series of sufferings, but by its power of conviction it inspires even a persecutor with the ambition of becoming a witness, even unto death, in the same glorious cause. May we not then, with the best grounded confidence, expect, that, from a steady profession of the truth, in the ordinary course of our lives, our light will so shine before men, as to induce the witnesses of our virtuous conduct to see our good works with holy admiration, and to strive with all imaginable eagerness that they also may glorify their Father which is in heaven?

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It was from that clear perception vouchsafed to the holy Apostles of the glories reserved for those that lived in the profession, and died for the support, of the true faith, that such constancy was derived, as made them eagerly embrace death, even when presented to them with all the circumstances of terror, which the ingenuity of malice could affix to it. Being deeply impressed with a sense of those privileges, which were annexed to the crown of martyrdom, they rejoiced, when they were accounted worthy to be invested with those privileges. They would not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. They were desirous of a better country, that is, an heavenly. They looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hereby were the most exquisite tortures rendered supportable: and whilst they walked through

through the valley of the shadow of death, they feared no evil; they had this inexhaustible source of consolation, that the LORD, the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, would ever be with them; that His rod and His staff would be their comfort and protection; and that the same goodness and mercy, which accompanied them in the most trying moments of their life, would be accomplished towards them in their final admission to the glories of His kingdom, who hath promised this blessing to His faithful servants:

“To him that overcometh, will I grant
“to sit with me on my throne, even as I
“also overcame, and am sat down with
“my Father on His throne.”

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invincible, the only true GOD, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, world without end. AMEN.

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they feared no evil: they had this inex-
haustible source of consolation, that the
Lord, the Shepherd and Bishop of their
souls, would ever be with them; that His
rod and His staff would be their comfort
and guidance, and that His angels would
attend them, and that He would accom-
pany them to the glory of His
Father, who had promised this blessing
to His faithful servants:
“To him that overcometh, will I grant
to sit with me on my throne, even as I
also overcome, and am set down with
my Father on His throne.”
There is the King eternal, immortal, in-
visible, the only true God, FATHER, SON,
and HOLY GHOST, be glorified, as it is
written, in the Holy Scriptures, Amen.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW

THE APOSTLE.

AUGUST 24:

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW.

St. JOHN I. 47.

*Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom
is no guile!*

WHEN we consider that the word of God, proceeding from the mouth of Christ, was (as it is admirably described by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews) quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart—when we remember, that its influence was wonderfully demonstrated, on some occasions, in turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of

the just; we shall less wonder at its efficacy in those instances, wherein the soil appears to have been in some degree prepared by divine grace for the reception of the good seed of the gospel. This seems to have been the favourable state, in which the preaching of our Blessed Saviour found the person, whom we this day commemorate, and in whose favour a testimony is borne, superior to every other commendation; *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*! It is true, that he is here called *Nathanael*; but from a variety of circumstances it unquestionably appears, that St. John is here speaking of the same person, whom the other Evangelists associate with St. *Philip*, under the appellation of *Bartholomew*. It is not at all improbable that both names belonged to him; but that the name *Bartholomew* is to be considered as a relative name, and

derived from his family; or a professional designation, describing him as a disciple of the *Tholmaean* school, which is supposed to have been a sect of some importance among the Jews*. From the short, but

* The learned and accurate Bishop Taylor, in his *Life of St. Bartholomew*, remarks, that, as a Son, the Apostle's name denotes no more than his being *בן-תולמאי*, the Son of Tholmai, a name not uncommon among the Jews: but it may relate to him as a disciple of some particular sect and institution; it being a custom for scholars, out of a great reverence to their masters or first instructors of that way, to adopt their names, as Ben-Ezra, Ben-Uzziel, &c. And this will be much more evident, if the observation be true, that among the members of the Jewish Church there were some who called themselves *Tholmaeans*, from Tholmai, scholar to Heber, the ancient master of the Hebrews, with whom Abraham was *confederate*, that is, joined himself to their society. [Vide Bolduc. de Eccl. post Leg. c. vii. p. 45.] To all this, if necessary, may be added the consent of several learned men*, who have given their suffrages in this matter, that the same person is expressed under the names of Nathanael and Bartholomew. [Taylor's *Lives of the Apostles*, p. 134.]

* Rupert. *Comm. in Jo. 1.* Jan. *Concord.* Onuphr. in *Fest.* Salmer. *Tract.* 18 *Tam.* 4. Montac. *Orig. Sac.* ii. 18. et al.

very

very comprehensive description here given of him by our Blessed Saviour, we are taught, that no hypocrisy or deceit was known to have found a place in the heart of this Saint of God. His candour and simplicity particularly appeared, in that, when he was told of Jesus, he was not carried away with popular prejudice, but being fully satisfied that He was the Messiah, he without hesitation owned Him to be such; pronouncing Him to be the Son of God, and the King of Israel.

This Apostle holds a distinguished place in the number of those illustrious persons, whose virtues we are invited to imitate, whilst we commemorate their sufferings for the sake of the gospel: and we are at the same time encouraged to admire, and zealously to profess that Religion, for the establishment of which so many saints and martyrs cheerfully laid down their lives,

in imitation of their Saviour. These ministers, these heroes of Christianity, were the happy instruments of conveying to us the knowledge of Christ Jesus by preaching His gospel through the world, even to this remote, and then scarcely-discovered part of it; and most of them regarded not their lives for the name of Jesus Christ. Can we ever sufficiently magnify that grace of God, whereby they were so wonderfully enabled to continue stedfast in the faith, despising the terror of death, in its most hideous forms, in the discharge of that important commission upon which they were sent forth by their Lord and Master? And can we ever sufficiently lament our own insensibility, if when so few difficulties and dangers attend us in the profession of Christianity, we are, nevertheless, cold and indifferent in our pursuit of the same eternal happiness, the same acceptance with

with God, the same never-fading crown of glory, for the attainment of which these holy persons counted not their lives dear unto themselves, deemed nothing too difficult to undertake, nothing too grievous to endure?

These festivals are most wisely set apart by our Church to be solemnized, not only that a due regard may be paid to the memory of such renowned champions of the faith, but also that we, being encompassed by such a cloud of witnesses, may lay aside every weight, and the sins which do most easily beset us, and may run with patience the race that is set before us: looking, first, unto JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith; and next to these his immediate followers, to the Apostles and Martyrs, men clothed, as we are, with flesh and blood; who patiently endured the contradiction of sinners, and rejoiced that they

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were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.

St. Bartholomew, after the martyrdom of St. Philip*, his beloved friend and fellow-labourer, is supposed to have journeyed into India, to disseminate the Christian faith; and from thence he returned to the greater Armenia, where he is said by some to have been crucified with his head downward, and by others to have suffered the dreadful torture of excoriation; which cruel treatment he bore with fortitude worthy of the cause in which he suffered, comforting and

* The ecclesiastical histories relate that St. Bartholomew was fastened to the cross at the same time and place with St. Philip, but that the consternation of the barbarians at the earthquake which happened as this last Apostle expired, [See p. 235 of this work,] induced them to take down St. Bartholomew, who was yet alive, from the cross, to which he had been bound with cords, and to dismiss him with every testimony of honour and respect.

confirming

confirming his Christian converts, even to the latest moment of his life.

Such was the return this holy Martyr experienced from a barbarous people for his endeavours to reclaim them from idolatry; such were the sufferings, the very recital, the very idea of which fills us with the utmost horror. But let the narration of his fortitude and perseverance fill us also with gratitude to God for his mercy towards this his faithful servant; and let us never despair of that spiritual support, be it of what nature soever, which our happier situation may require. The arm of persecution is not lifted up against us; we are, blessed be God, at full liberty to profess that Religion, which we firmly believe came forth from God, and is above all others calculated to bring us to God. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith with-*

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not wavering; for He is faithful that hath promised: He will never leave us nor forsake us: He will make us more than conquerors; He will cause us to be triumphant over the temptations which assault us.

From the edifying example of this blessed Saint the Christian Church may gather many important and instructive lessons: some of them we shall here enumerate.

1. That a mind free from undue prepossessions (as that of St. Bartholomew appears to have been) is the best preparative for the reception of truth. Indeed, where the judgment is obscured by prejudice, the light of divine truth cannot easily break through the thick cloud which overspreads it: little less than such a miracle as threw that eminent Persecutor of Jesus and His gospel to the earth, and converted him into a no less eminent Promoter of the Christian faith, can open the eyes or the ears of such,

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as have a veil of obduracy spread over their hearts, through which they are unable to behold and comprehend the interesting truths of the gospel of Christ.

2. That true zeal, such as the Apostle of this day possessed, stops at no difficulties, is affrighted by no dangers, and parts with life cheerfully, when the Providence of God makes it our duty to surrender it, rather than renounce the faith of Christ. We every where see to what lengths a *false* and *intemperate* zeal will carry men; even to such a conduct as is highly blameworthy, even though the motive might have been originally good: God forbid then, that where men are zealously affected in a *good* cause, they should be discouraged by any opposition which they may meet with from the enemies of the truth. To a lukewarm indifference every little obstacle is insurmountable: “a lion

is always in the way," where indolence prevails; while firm and sincere affection towards the object in pursuit, either sees no difficulty, or disregards it, when seen.

3. That sincerity, and a mind utterly free from guile or deceit, is one of the brightest ornaments of a Christian: to have our conversation in the world in all simplicity and godly sincerity is absolutely necessary, that our obedience may be acceptable to God, and our general conduct praiseworthy and of good report among men.

For the attainment of these eminent graces, let us consider, that all our religious actions are of no value in the sight of God, unless they are performed with a single regard to His authority who hath commanded them, and from pure motives of obedience to His holy will; and therefore, if we have other sinister motives in view, such as undue applause or sordid advantage, we have no ground to hope for

that reward, which God hath reserved for His faithful servants hereafter.

Let our minds then be influenced by the consciousness of God's continual presence and protection. Let us remember that *all our ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and that He pondereth all our goings.* This consideration, added to devout prayer for His assistance, will keep us upright before God, and unblameable in the sight of men; and will enable us, however thorny may be the path which leads to everlasting glory, to persist in it without weariness, and so "to pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal."

Which God of His infinite mercy grant, through the merits and mediation of JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, glory, adoration, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

SAINT MATTHEW

THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

SEPTEMBER 21.

SAINT MATTHEW

THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

SEPTEMBER 21

I have well known that which con-
firmed by general experience, that
anyone who is truly converted,
becomes a new creature in the eyes
of men. May we not have the prophecies
and the promises of the Lord
fulfilled by the time
of the coming of the Son of Man?

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SAINT MATTHEW.

St. MATTHEW IX. 9.

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, "Follow me." And he arose, and followed Him.

IT is a well-known observation, confirmed by general experience, that eminent virtue, if unhappily corrupted, becomes depraved and vicious in the extreme. May we not invert the proposition? And are we not encouraged by the same experience to observe, with peculiar satisfaction,

faction, that vice corrected and reformed
 is often seen to rise to an eminent degree
 of perfection in holiness and virtue? If an
 example should be wanting, it occurs in
 the character of the Apostle and Evan-
 gelist of this day, whose office (although
 his names of *Levi* and *Matthew* bespeak
 him of Jewish origin) was that of a pub-
 lican, or toll-gatherer to the Romans; an
 employment had in very low esteem among
 the Jews; though among the Romans it
 was accounted an office of some credit and
 reputation, till it was rendered infamous by
 the iniquitous practices of those who were
 engaged in it. The Jews, who bore with
 reluctance the Roman yoke, accounted it
 unlawful to do these publicans an office of
 common kindness; they were not admitted
 as proper to give evidence in any cause;
 they were not suffered to join in the offices
 of religious worship, and were shunned in
 all civil and religious affairs

affairs of civil society. We may judge how infamous men of this profession were accounted, when we find with whom they are joined; as "publicans and sinners," "publicans and harlots," "publicans and heathens."

This odium and prejudice had, we may presume, its accustomed effect in such cases. Though in the first instance the employment did not absolutely carry criminality with it, yet a stigma so universally affixed, abhorrence so generally diffused, the hatred and jealousy of a whole country so certainly incurred, prevented persons of eminence and virtue from engaging in a profession of this unpopular and dishonourable nature. It is no disparagement to a saint of God to confess this, when Christ Jesus Himself, speaking of men of this description, calls them sick, lost, and, by way of eminence, *Sinners*. He calls them

sick—He calls them lost—He calls them sinners: but at the same moment he declares that He came to heal, to seek, and to save them.

It was St. Matthew's appointed office to receive custom of all merchandize which came by the sea of Galilee; and by the sea-side he was sitting, in the actual discharge of his function, when our Saviour called him to be a disciple, and said unto him, "*Follow me.*" That one expressive admonition told him to forsake the world and its allurements, and to walk in the steps of a suffering Saviour. It bade him renounce the temptations to avarice, "the hidden things of dishonesty," and embrace the humble condition of Him who had not where to lay His head. It called on him to elevate his soul from gross and sordid attachments, and to become a candidate for immortal glory. If he had before committed

committed iniquity—if his heart had been in any degree infected by the contagion of sin, and the corruptions of evil society, from that moment a new life, a total reformation was to ensue in his regenerate soul. “Awake,” the voice seemed to say, “awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light. The night is far spent, the day is at hand—cast off the works of darkness! From the fetters of sin, from the depths of infamy, exalt thyself to the peculiar service of Heaven. Live and die a faithful witness to the truth. When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren; and let the pious labours of the Apostle and Evangelist atone for the errors and transgressions of the publican.”

He heard, and he obeyed. Joy was in the presence of the Angels of God over a sinner that so repented—over a wandering sheep thus restored to the heavenly fold.

Being

Being now a disciple of Jesus Christ, we see him inviting those of his friends, whom he hoped our Saviour's conversation might affect as it had done himself, to partake of a feast at his house. At this feast the Saviour of the world, who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, condescended to be present as a guest: to the great glory of his boundless charity towards the souls of men, though to the great offence of the censorious Pharisees, who, in their rigid adherence to the letter of religion, lost sight of its merciful and conciliatory spirit. In vain had the Lord spoken to them by his Prophet, and shewed them that which was good; they loved not mercy, they walked not humbly with their God.

St. Matthew stands first in the number of those who have handed down to posterity the history of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ. His inspired writings, preserved

preserved to us by the mercy of God, have instructed and comforted the faithful in every age of the Christian Church, and will continue to do so till the great consummation of all things; when that majestic scene shall take place, of which St. Matthew has given us so sublime a description*; when the SON OF MAN shall come in His glory, and all His holy Angels with Him, and shall sit on the throne of His glory; when multitudes who have been enlightened by the gospel of truth shall adore the mercy of God, which enabled these holy persons to record the words of eternal life.

This great Apostle continued at Jerusalem, in the society of his brethren, till after our LORD's ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. He then began

* Chap. xxv. 31—46.

his

his ministry in Judea, and for several years endeavoured to convert the Jews to the faith of Christ. Afterwards he journeyed among the barbarous nations beyond Egypt; and continued his progress as far as Ethiopia, where he mightily triumphed over error and idolatry; and where it is most probable that he was called to the crown of martyrdom. About eight years after the death of our Saviour, while he was yet in Palestine, (at the request of the Jewish converts, and at the instance of the Apostles,) he wrote the Gospel, which, to this day, bears his name: a work, for which he was eminently qualified, as having himself heard the words and seen the actions of his Blessed Master which he recorded. This Gospel he wrote, as is generally believed, in the Hebrew language, for the use of his countrymen: it was soon translated into Greek; and the translation was

approved

approved by the Apostles, and has always been received by the Church as authentic *.

When we reflect on the situation of life from which this holy Evangelist was called, we are led to adore the wonderful and all-powerful grace of God, who seeth not as man seeth, and who divideth to every man severally as He will. We acknowledge that He is the LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." In particular we acknowledge his

* See the testimonies of Irenæus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustin on this subject, as quoted by Dr. Townson in his Discourses on the Gospels. That learned divine gives it as his own opinion, that St. Matthew, who certainly was qualified for such a task, wrote his work (like his countryman Josephus) in both languages—"so doing the work of an Evangelist for his brethren of the common faith, to both of whom charity made him a debtor. The popular language of the first believers was a dialect of Hebrew; but they who spoke Greek became quickly a considerable part of the Church of Christ." Disc. ii. § 2. p. 27.

great

great mercy in delivering the Evangelist, whom we now commemorate, from that state of peculiar danger to which the nature of his profession exposed him; from that vice, which so entirely alienates the heart from God, that it is with the strictest justice and propriety considered as a species of idolatry. For surely the covetous man, who makes gold his confidence, and trusteth in it as his chief happiness, does in effect say to his treasure, "Thou art my God." It is the parent of fraud and injustice, of falsehood and oppression, of many of the most pestilent evils which are prevalent in the world. It tends to puff men up with pride; it leads them to form an undue estimation of themselves, and, by a strange contradiction in its nature, is often made the instrument of luxury, intemperance, and sinful excess. No propensity can be more unreasonable than that of which

which we are speaking; it is the height of folly as well as of wickedness; for it pursues happiness in a way wherein it never can be found; great riches being, in numberless instances, the occasion of perplexity, restlessness, and misery to the human mind, instead of affording any additional comfort, peace, or tranquillity.

In every point of view therefore it was a most gracious act of mercy in our Blessed Saviour, by His divine call, to withdraw the Apostle and Evangelist, of whom we are speaking, from a situation so pregnant with evil: and we may all conclude, from this instance of gracious compassion, that there is mercy for the worst of sinners, if they forsake their evil ways, and become obedient to the voice of God, communicated by the ministers of His word. We see, that the grace which was bestowed on this holy Apostle was not in vain—we see him

him bringing forth the fruits of repentance; and teaching mankind by his example, that poverty and want are readily to be embraced, if they are consequent on the performance of our duty to our heavenly Master; for the sake of whom we must renounce honours, pleasures, riches, distinction, power, every thing, in short, which this world can offer to our preference and regard.

If we would enter into the true spirit of this instructive festival, we shall imitate that humility and disinterestedness, which so distinguished the character of the blessed Apostle whom we celebrate. We shall keep our minds free from the ensharing vice of covetousness, and shall raise our affections above this perishable world, the most dangerous enemy to our eternal salvation. We shall employ our chief care in attending to the concerns of a better life, and shall seek
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the wisdom which cometh from above, on our conformity to which nothing less than a blessed immortality depends. We shall rely with unshaken confidence on Him who hath promised, that if we first seek His kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, all outward necessities shall be added unto us. Contented with such things as we have, and trusting to Providence to increase them as He shall think fit, by a blessing on our honest industry, we shall so use the world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away. What frequent proofs does the experience of every day bring to us of the uncertainty of riches! In what an unexpected and sudden manner do they often make themselves wings and flee away! So transient are they, so fleeting, that no human means can secure the continued enjoyment of them. Nor is this all. Life itself is on the wing, and

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when

when we have heaped up riches, however laboriously, we cannot tell with any certainty who shall gather, at least who shall enjoy, them. Let us then work the works of Him that hath sent us while it is day: let us be charitable according to our ability: let us be rich in good works, "ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life." Be it our care, that neither the example nor the instruction of this servant of God be set before us in vain: by the one we shall be taught to forsake the world and its advantages, whenever they stand in competition with our duty to God; and from the other we shall learn the way which leads to heaven and eternal glory. His precepts, together with those of his fellow-labourers in the gospel, will guide us in every case

of

of difficulty and danger; whether amidst the smiles of prosperity, or through the darker scenes of tribulation and sorrow. Let us adore that mercy which raised up holy men, whose writings, given by the inspiration of God, are thus able to make us wise unto salvation. Let us value as we ought the sacred oracles of eternal truth. Let us read them diligently, hear them constantly, and observe them faithfully; that so, receiving instruction from the Spirit of God, and laying up His words in our hearts, we may have our fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our LORD:

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, glory, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

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 the midst of prosperity, or through the
 darker scenes of tribulation and sorrow.
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 spiration of God, are able to make us
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 Let us read them diligently, hear them
 continually, and obey them faithfully;
 that by receiving instruction from the Spirit
 of God, and laying up His words in our
 hearts, we may have our feet upon the
 rock, and in the end overcoming all through
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom, with the Father and the
 Holy Ghost, be ascribed all glory and
 honour, with the Father, now and
 ever. Amen.

SAINT MICHAEL

AND

ALL ANGELS.

SEPTEMBER 29,

A a 3

SAINT MICHAEL

SAINT MICHAEL

AND

THE Festival which the Church calls
upon **ALL ANGELS** is a day, different
materially from every other, which we meet
with in the course of the year. We are
not at this time reminded, as in other
cases, of the pre-eminence of some
of the most distinguished of our fellow-
Christians, who cheerfully devoted them-
selves to suffering and death for the sake
of the gospel. We have a still higher
subject for our contemplation; and our
thoughts are carried to the celestial world.

SAINT MICHAEL.

HEBREWS I. 14.

Are they not all ministering spirits?—

THE Festival which the Church calls upon us to celebrate this day, differs materially from every other which we meet with in the course of the year. We are not at this time reminded, as in other cases, of the pre-eminent virtues of some of the most distinguished of our fellow-christians, who chearfully devoted themselves to sufferings and death for the sake of the gospel: we have a still higher subject for our contemplation; and our thoughts are raised to the grateful consideration

deration of a superior order of beings, sent forth as ministering spirits by the Father of mercies, to minister unto such as shall be heirs of salvation.

Our subject will therefore lead us to consider the nature, the office, and the employment of Angels*.

AN ANGEL, in its primary and most general signification, is another name for a messenger, an ambassador: it is in this sense with the utmost propriety applied to the heavenly spirits, *sent forth* on an errand of mercy to the heirs of salvation. The testimony of the sacred writers concerning their appearance to holy persons, on solemn and important occasions, is so clear and so

* It has been judged expedient, from the high and mysterious nature of the enquiry, purposely to avoid entering into the question, what person is mentioned in holy Scripture under the high title of *מִי כָאֵל*, "Who is as God?" And we have therefore endeavoured to consider the subject in a more diffusive and general view.

decisive,

decisive, as to leave us no room to doubt of their actual existence. That they are pure spirits, suffered to assume a visible shape, in order to accomplish the purposes of their mission, seems perfectly agreeable to the tenor of Scripture, as well as to the received opinion of the Christian Church. By the Psalmist they are described as "excelling in strength," as "fulfilling the commandment of God," and "hearkening to the voice of His word;" and their eminent purity and holiness entitles them to the denomination of—the HOLY Angels.

With respect to their office, we are expressly told, that they attend upon the great King of heaven and earth, to receive His commands, and to execute His will: to declare the dispensations and decrees of heaven to those whom they may more immediately concern; and to confirm the reality of those extraordinary events, which
required

required to be ratified in a miraculous and supernatural manner.

Of the time of their creation we have no direct account. We read, that, in the beginning of time, God made the heavens as well as the earth; and that on the first day of His work of creation He said, "Let there be Light!" Either of these periods might be assigned, if we were disposed to indulge conjecture on the subject, as the time when these children of light first sang their hallelujahs before the throne of God.

It is probable, that man, while in his state of unspotted innocence, had Angels for his companions. It is certain, that during the earlier ages, when God held immediate communication with his people, the appearance of these celestial beings was frequent, and their intercourse with mankind a circumstance of no very rare occurrence.

currence. But here we must speak with caution; for in many passages of the Old Testament, where we read that the Angel of the LORD appeared, and did this or that, the sense of the passage makes it impossible to be interpreted in any other way, than as the words literally translated imply, THE ANGEL JEHOVAH: the Word of God; the second person in the Blessed Trinity; the Angel of the covenant of salvation; rendering Himself, for weighty and important reasons, in some sort visible to human eyes, before His actual assumption of the body of His flesh. Such, we may presume, and such, indeed, we have much evidence for believing, was the Angel who wrestled with Jacob—who appeared to Moses in the bush—to Joshua, when arming for the war—to Gideon and Manoah, with the promise of salvation to Israel from their enemies. And when
the

the prophet Balaam, misled by ambition and avarice, went on his impious journey, the Angel Jehovah rebuked him for his disobedience, and commanded him, saying, "The word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak*."

But, above all, when, in the fulness of time, it pleased God to send His only begotten Son into the world, then went the divine command forth, "Let all the Angels of God worship Him!" Then were the inhabitants of heaven the willing messengers of peace and comfort to all mankind. Not only the birth of Christ Himself, but that of His forerunner was foretold by the mission of an Angel. An Angel vindicated the honour of His holy and innocent mother. Angels at His nativity sang the hymn of joy.

* It is clear that Balaam understood the nature and character of the Divine Personage whom he saw in his vision. Compare Numbers xxiii. 12, 26. and Chap. xxiv. 13. with Chap. xxii. 20, 35.

Angels warned his adopted father to flee into Egypt from the fury of Herod, and again assigned the time of His return. In the course of His abode upon earth Jesus was in an especial manner "seen of Angels." When the temptations of Satan in the wilderness were brought to an end, Angels came and ministered to our triumphant Saviour, then openly victorious over the powers of darkness. When the hour of His passion approached, an Angel appeared unto Him, and strengthened Him in His bitter agony. Angels were His ministers in His resurrection, when He arose a conqueror from His tomb. They remained at the holy sepulchre to administer comfort to His afflicted servants. They taught the disciples not to regret the departure of their Lord at His glorious ascension, but to look forward with joy and hope to the hour of His second coming.

coming. And, in the infancy of Christianity, the host of heaven shewed themselves interested in the support of the religion of Jesus; even as they had declared themselves, at the birth of its Author; they rescued the saints from the vengeance of their persecutors; and smote the oppressors, in the pride of their hearts, with a destruction manifestly brought on them from God.

With respect to their employment and ministry, as far as we ourselves are immediately concerned, it is our great comfort to reflect, that they are continually engaged in guarding and defending us; in frustrating the malicious designs of our enemies; in assisting us in our conflicts with evil spirits, when they would suggest either vain or impious thoughts; and in enabling us to stand against the principalities and powers of darkness; in rejoicing in the conversion of sinners; and in contemplating,

plating, with rapturous delight, the mysteries of divine goodness as displayed in man's redemption, "which things the Angels desire to look into."

The opinion of guardian-angels attendant on good men, by the appointment of Heaven, was prevalent among mankind from the earliest ages of the world. The patriarch Abraham, dispatching his faithful servant on an errand of the utmost consequence, tells him, "the LORD GOD of heaven and earth shall send his Angel before thee," to take especial care of thee, and to prosper thee in the way wherein thou goest, and in the business whereon thou art sent. And to this moment we are assured, that though they are not perceptible to our outward senses, they do still, by divine appointment, succour and defend us on earth. The heart of the anxious parent is soothed by the thought that his child,

through the various dangers of its tender years, is under the watchful care and guardianship of its superintending Angel*. When the Apostle St. Peter, miraculously delivered from prison, was confidently declared to be at the door of the house, where the disciples were assembled, they could only solve what they conceived the impossibility of the fact, by alledging that it must needs be *his Angel*; a circumstance which very strongly confirms the idea generally prevalent of the existence and superintendence of these guardian spirits. But the verse of the text puts the matter beyond all possibility of dispute; for it describes them as sent forth, for the very purpose of ministering to them that are the heirs of salvation.

* It is probable that in allusion to this, our Saviour saith, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for in heaven *their Angels* do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

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The constant attendance of these heavenly spirits on the great Author of our redemption has been already considered; and in every situation of our life, which will admit of any degree of comparison with His, we have reason to rejoice in an humble but confident hope of the same interposition in our favour. We believe, and are sure, that not only during the course of our lives, but in the hour of our departure from the world, God will give His Angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways. When we are called hence in the true faith and fear of God, the Angels will perform their last office in conveying us to the mansions of bliss and glory, as they are said to have done to Lazarus; and will be glad and rejoice in our salvation. We are also assured that, in the great and dreadful day of judgment, the Almighty will send His Angels with the sound of the trumpet, and

will sever the wicked from the just; when the ransomed soul shall, through redeeming mercy, be admitted to a degree of glory, equal to that of the blessed spirits themselves, in the presence of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The principal use to be made of this doctrine of ministering spirits, under the name and character of Angels, is this; that we consider them as peculiarly present in our public assemblies for divine worship, carefully observing our behaviour, regulating our minds, and assisting us in the performance of our religious duties: that we express our thankfulness to God for the many benefits which we receive from their ministration; whereby the power and malice of the devil, if our will concur with their efforts to deliver us, will be defeated, and the malignant designs of those evil instruments employed by him

for

for our destruction will be brought to
nought.

The intellectual and glorious Angels,
(who inhabit those palaces, wherein no-
thing but light, and tranquillity, and blessed
immortality for ever dwell,) are such per-
fect observers of that law which the Most
High whom they love and adore hath
given them, that our Saviour Himself, in
His divine form of prayer, hath taught us
to ask of God, that His will may be done by
us on earth, as it is by those blessed spirits
in heaven. Let us imitate their exam-
ple, and, in conformity to their readi-
ness to help us forward in the work of
our salvation, let us at all times be ready
to condescend to the lowest offices for
the benefit of our fellow-christians. Let
us never despise those, who, being re-
deemed by the blood of Christ, are there-
fore dear unto God, and, as such, how-

ever mean, however humble may be their situation in the world, are under the protection of these ministering spirits. Let us consider the ministry and protection of Angels as then most probably secured, when we continue stedfast in the faith of Christ, and the discipline of His Church; hereby becoming more than merely in name, *the heirs of eternal salvation*; at the same time abstaining from all idolatrous reverence of them: since, though the Angels are high in dignity, and excellent in glory, they are not entitled to any adoration whatever. *Worship me not, I say thy fellow-servant,* is the language of those heavenly spirits to all, who, from erroneous and misguided zeal, would fall down before them. And St. Paul, among the errors likely to assault the Church, speaks of the *worshipping of Angels*; as one of those irregularities in religion, into

which weaker minds might be seduced. But our Blessed Saviour has given us the best instruction on this important subject; for He hath expressly said, "Thou shalt worship the LORD thy GOD, and Him ONLY shalt thou serve."

May this divine precept be written in our hearts; and let us look only to the mediation of Jesus Christ for acceptance at the last day; when, as we humbly trust, we shall, with Angels, and Arch-angels, and all the company of heaven, be called to celebrate the high praises of their Father and our Father, of their GOD and our GOD:

To whom, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory, and praise, henceforth and for ever. AMEN.

which weaker minds might be seduced.
But our Highest Saviour has given us the
best instruction on this important subject;
for the high exorcist said, "Thou shalt
worship the Lord thy God, and Him
only shalt thou serve."
May this divine precept be written in
our hearts, and let us look only to the
mediation of Jesus Christ for acceptance
at the last day; when, as we solemnly
trust, we shall, with Angels, and Arch-
angels, and all the company of heaven,
be called to celebrate the high praises of
their Father and our Father, of their God
and our God:

Is whom, FATHER, SON, and HOLY
GHOST, be ascribed, as it most due, all
honour, and glory, and praise, now, and
and for ever. AMEN.

SAINT LUKE

THE EVANGELIST.

OCTOBER 18.

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SAINT LUKE

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SAINT LUKE

THE EVANGELIST.

SAINT LUKE.

COLOSSIANS IV. 14.

LUKE, *the beloved physician.*—

IN whatever passages of holy Scripture the Evangelist of this day is mentioned, he is always spoken of in terms expressive of the constancy of his faith, and the lustre of his amiable character. He is represented as closely attached to the Apostle St. Paul, while others, on various pretences, had departed from him. When Demas, once a fellow-labourer, had forsaken him, having loved this present world, Luke alone continued faithfully attached to his honoured patron—"Only Luke is with me—Luke, the beloved physician," to whose professional character, as well as to his evangelical,

lical, the Church alludes in her Collect for this day's service. She considers him, indeed, under the character of an Evangelist, or a preacher of the gospel, as, for that reason, a physician of the soul; it being undoubtedly true, that for diseases of a spiritual nature no medicines can be so effectual, as those of the doctrines and precepts delivered in the word of God. In applying to him the high character given by St. Paul to his principal fellow-labourer, the brother "*whose praise is in the gospel*," she determines him to be that eminent servant of God, (called also Silas, or Silvanus,) who was chosen by the Churches to travel with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, as a dispenser of the grace which was administered by them both, to the glory of the same LORD *.

I need
* See the 8th Chapter of the Second Epistle to the
Corinthians. From the 15th, 16th, and 20th Chapters
of the Acts it appears evidently, that Silas (or Silvanus)
was the author of that inspired work; and it is well
observed

I need scarcely observe to you, that the title of Evangelist was very soon after the introduction of Christianity limited to those

observed by a writer, of whose learning and ingenuity there can be no doubt, though his religious tenets are most unhappily erroneous, "that *Lucas*, (that is, Luke,) is exactly the same abbreviation of *Lucanus*, a name derived from *lucus*, a grove or wood, that *Silas* is of *Silvanus*, from *silva*, a word of the same signification. Since, therefore, we find that amongst those Jewish Christians particularly, who were most conversant amongst the Greeks and Romans, it was customary to change their original Hebrew names, (without doubt, the more to familiarize themselves to those people, as *Tabitha* was exchanged for the Greek word *Dorcas*, and *Saul* for the Roman name *Paulus*,) it seems clear that the name of the author of these histories, which in the Hebrew most probably was some word of similar import, viz. belonging to a grove or wood, was translated indifferently by the Roman names *Lucanus* or *Silvanus*; and he was called by some *Silas*, and by others *Lucas*, as having both the same meaning; for many circumstances concur to render it highly probable, that the *Lucas* whom St. Paul mentions to Timothy in his Second Epistle, as the only person who remained with him, is the very same as *Silas*, both which names, if re-translated into the original Hebrew, must be expressed by the same word."

four

four distinguished persons, who, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, wrote, and delivered down to posterity, a true and infallible history of the life, doctrine, and miracles of Jesus Christ. Their appellation is derived from the nature of their writings; as containing those *glad tidings* of pardon and peace, of grace and salvation, which the Son of God, the subject of their gospel, came to deliver to mankind. These four authentic histories (if they may not rather be called *one history*, recorded by four inspired writers) form a very considerable part of the New Testament; and, amidst all the prevailing heresies in the early ages of the Christian Church, they were constantly referred to, as writings of indubitable authority.

Of the sacred historians here spoken of, none enters so minutely as the Evangelist St. Luke into the particulars of our Saviour's

Saviour's birth, and the miraculous circumstances which preceded it. His history opens with an account of the extraordinary nativity of St. John the Baptist, of whom the Prophets had spoken, as of one that should be the Messenger sent to prepare mankind for the reception of the Messiah. From this interesting recital, St. Luke proceeds to the annunciation and promise of the birth of Jesus Christ made by an Angel of God to the Virgin Mary. He very particularly describes the journey of the holy pair from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, with all the various circumstances of the humble birth of the child Jesus. A sign is given by the Angel to the shepherds, by which they might discover and distinguish the Saviour of the world; "Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger." But let it not escape our observation,

tion, how immediately this abasement of the Son of Man is contrasted by an acknowledgement from heaven, that the Heavenly Host themselves were interested in this event: for suddenly they were heard praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men*." Thus carefully doth this Evangelist guard us against any false impressions, which the story of Christ's humiliation might make upon our minds; that so our faith in His divinity may remain unshaken. Whilst we behold Him in swaddling-clothes, we at the same time hear the Angels singing their hallelujahs to Him: whilst He is lying in the manger,

* Or, more properly, *among* men, according to the obvious meaning of the words *ἐν ἀνθρώποις*; and thus will the three grand purposes and effects of the Christian Redemption be more fully declared; the last of which is the establishment of universal benevolence in the mind of every true professor of the gospel,

lo!

lo! a bright star shines in the firmament, and points the way to His abode: when He is circumcised, as the son of Abraham, a name is given Him from heaven, as the Son of God: and, at the last, when He is expiring on the cross, the great luminary of heaven seems to withdraw itself, and all nature appears to suffer with Him almost to its dissolution.

But it is not within the compass of my design to give you a particular account of this Evangelist's writings, which would engage a very great portion of our time, and would carry us into a most extensive field of enquiry; I shall rather, in conformity to my general purpose, give you a short account of their author, and draw from it such instructions as may properly be derived from the observation of this Festival.

The history given us of St. Luke, or Silas, is, that he was born at Antioch, in Syria,

Syria, a city famous for agriculture, commerce, learning, and good manners: and distinguished as the place, wherein the disciples of Jesus Christ were first called by the name of *Christians*. His profession was that of medicine; a science not held in very high reputation; for, though its object is, of all others, the most important to our earthly comfort, its end being the preservation or restoration of health, yet it was cultivated and professed by persons of inferior rank, and not more than ordinary advantages. On his return from Rome (after he had received his freedom) to his native city, Antioch, this Evangelist is supposed to have been converted to Christianity by St. Paul; whose inseparable companion he became in his sufferings for the gospel; attending him in all his dangers; sharing his dungeon; supporting and comforting him amidst all his trials, and under all his injurious treatment at Jerusalem; accom-

panying him in his perilous voyage to Rome, and lessening the inconveniences of his confinement there, by the discharge of every kind office, which respect, attachment, and grateful affection prompted him to perform.

Where this Evangelist, after the death of his venerable master St. Paul, preached the gospel of Christ, is not clearly determined, nor is the time or the manner of his death ascertained; but it is generally supposed, that, about the eightieth year of his age, he was dragged to his martyrdom in some city of Greece (probably Achaia*) by a party of unbelievers, who were not

* It was in this province, that he committed his Gospel to writing; and not at Alexandria in Egypt, as is supposed by some of the Fathers. Dr. Townson proves very satisfactorily, that he did not write it in Judea; and deduces a very ingenious argument against the other hypothesis, from the method in which this Evangelist marks the divisions of time. Disc. vi. § 2.

able to endure the wisdom and the boldness with which he spake.

Besides the Gospel which is known by his name, St. Luke also wrote the history of the Acts of the Apostles. In composing the former, he is supposed to have had the assistance of his beloved companion St. Paul; besides which, he derived his intelligence, as he tells us, from those, "who, from the beginning, had been eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." In the latter work, he particularly relates the actions and the sufferings of the chief of the Apostles, to whom he was a faithful friend and assistant, and in whose labours and sufferings he had himself such a considerable share. His history is written in clear and perspicuous language, in polite and elegant diction, and in a very exact and accurate manner. Both the Gospel of St. Luke, and his Acts of the Apostles, are addressed

to

to a person of rank and consequence, named Theophilus; either because that was his real name, or because the person to whom he writes was, in an eminent degree, *a lover of God*; that being the true interpretation of the word *Theophilus*. Whoever he might be, he appears to have made some proficiency in the knowledge of those sacred truths, concerning which the historian undertakes to give him more full and particular information. To convince you that these were matters of the highest importance, and that they are conveyed in terms the most persuasive and eloquent, I need only refer you to the writings of this divinely-inspired Evangelist: let me therefore earnestly exhort you to the diligent and frequent perusal of these inestimable pages, which set before you “the blessed hope of everlasting life,” through faith in our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If you are persuaded, that the great malady of the soul is sin, and if you feel in yourselves, from your own personal experience, that you are at every moment liable to its contagious influence, you will repair with eagerness to that Physician of souls, by the medicine of whose wholesome doctrines all the diseases of your souls may be healed. From Him you will learn what course to pursue, what remedies to apply, that your weakness may be strengthened, and your spiritual health may be established: you will rejoice in those glad tidings of salvation, which the Evangelist of this day, in terms so peculiarly affecting, published to the world: you will heartily thank and praise God for that inestimable redemption wrought for us by Him, whom St. Luke describes in his Gospel to have been under every circumstance of abasement as a man, al-

though He was crowned with divine majesty, being very and eternal God.

From the conduct of this Evangelist—from the unalterable attachment which he shewed to St. Paul throughout all his various sufferings, let us learn, that, as it is our duty to “rejoice with them that do rejoice,” so is it no less our duty to “weep with them that weep;” especially, when their sorrows are the effect of their resolute attachment to the cause of Christ and His gospel. “Bear ye one another’s burthens,” saith the Apostle, “and so fulfil the law of Christ.” To alleviate the sorrows of those around us, is a high point of Christian duty: this is that *love* which is the *fulfilling of the law*; and it is one of the most exalted instances of that love, to encourage such as may suffer for righteousness’ sake to perseverance in well-doing. And though, in this highly-privileged coun-

try, we may not be called to personal sufferings for the sake of religion; yet will many opportunities be afforded, to those who are willing to improve them, of performing those duties of brotherly kindness, which the necessities of our fellow-christians, in every age, and under various circumstances, demand. We shall never want occasions to administer relief and consolation, to support those whom God is pleased to visit with affliction, and by our presence, our counsels, and the offices of tender friendship, to cheer them in the gloomy night of their adversity,

Thus to apply those healing medicines which the gospel affords, and thus wisely to adapt them to the diseases of the soul—in plainer terms, thus to assist and pray for, to exhort and encourage our brethren to perseverance in well-doing, is a work
of

of Christian kindness, which, whilst it will not fail to be applauded by men, will be graciously accepted by a just and holy God, through Jesus Christ our LORD :

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour, and glory, and praise, henceforth and for ever. AMEN.

of Christian kindness, which, whilst it will
 not fail to be applauded by man, will be
 graciously accepted by a just and holy God,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord:

To whom, with the FATHER and the
 HOLY GHOST, be all honour, and glory,
 and praise, henceforth and for ever. AMEN.

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE,

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE,

APOSTLES,

OCTOBER 28;

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE

Now therefore, as we have no more prophets and
apostles, and as we have no more
signs, and of the household of God, we
are built upon the foundation of the ap-
ostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself
being the chief corner-stone.

It is a constant source of content and
satisfaction to every professor of Chris-
tianity, that the religion which he has em-
braced is founded on a Rock; that it is not
an airy system, the multiplying produce
of fancy, prejudice, or enthusiasm, but that
it has its ground in the truth, and its

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE.

EPHESIANS II. 19, 20.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone,

IT is a constant source of comfort and satisfaction to every professor of Christianity, that the religion which he has embraced is founded on a Rock: that it is not an airy system, the unsubstantial produce of fancy, prejudice, or enthusiasm; but that it has its origin in the most perfect wisdom,

is

is established on the most decisive evidence, and is confirmed by every testimony that any matter of fact can with any justice or reason require. The objections of its adversaries have been brought forward with all the artifice and all the virulence that inveterate malice could suggest: and those objections have been fully and satisfactorily answered, in such a manner, as has conducted to the still greater honour, and still more evident confirmation of the truth of the gospel, than if it had never been called in question.

The Collect for this day, like many others of those admirable prayers, has an immediate reference to a portion of holy Scripture: it is taken from the passage which I have just now recited, wherein St. Paul animates the faith and hope of his Ephesian converts. He therein acknowledges the wisdom and mercy of God,
who

who hath built His Church upon the sure and immoveable foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being Himself the chief corner-stone. In this spiritual building (as heretofore in the material) dwells the presence of Jehovah. Here are appointed sacraments in the place of now cancelled sacrifices; and the blessings of redemption are commemorated in the most solemn act of our religion, in a manner that corresponds with those offerings upon the altar of God, which foreshewed the necessity of the *one great oblation*, to be offered by the LAMB without blemish, who taketh away all our sins. Of this sacred temple Christ is said to be the chief corner-stone; the mighty bond of union, the pillar whereon the whole edifice rests, and without which it would unavoidably fall to the ground. And it is founded on the Apostles and Prophets, as dispensers of the truths

which

which they received from above; which truths are established on Christ, the basis of that foundation, from which the whole divine system originates. The concurrent testimonies of Apostles and Prophets, sanctioned and confirmed by the divine authority of Christ Himself, give the utmost assurance to the true believer, that his faith is steadfast and immoveable. He knows, that, in embracing the gospel of Christ, he hath not been led astray by cunningly-devised fables; on the contrary, he hath every reason to be thoroughly persuaded, that the words which he hath read and heard concerning Christ Jesus are in very deed the words of GOD. What testimony can be more convincing, than that given to the Saviour of men, by them that were admitted to those mysterious visions and revelations, which, for a time, seemed, as it were, to open the splendour of heaven

ven to their eyes? Hear the declaration of one of these eye-witnesses of His humiliation as a man, and of the majesty of His transfiguration as the Son of God. "He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED: and this voice, which came from Heaven, *we heard*, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

But the Divinity of our Saviour's person, and the truth of His mission, as the Apostle adds, do not depend altogether upon that which happened on mount Tabor on the day of His transfiguration. "We have *also*," he tells us, "a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in
" your

" your hearts : knowing this, that no pro-
 " phecy of the Scriptures is of any private
 " interpretation ;" all tend to the gene-
 " ral establishment of those truths to which
 they refer ; or rather, to which they look
 forward : " for the prophecy came not in
 " old time," nor indeed at any time, " by
 " the will of man, but holy men of God
 " spake, as they were moved by the Holy
 " Ghost."

This then is that sure foundation upon
 which our Religion stands ; this is the
 Rock on which the Church to which we
 belong is built : an uninterrupted chain of
 prophecies exactly fulfilled : a series of mi-
 racles, many of them publicly performed,
 and all of them admitted and believed with
 almost unanimous consent : the Divinity of
 Jesus Christ, attested and confirmed by a
 voice from heaven, and asserted and de-
 clared beyond all possibility of doubt by

His

His resurrection from the dead: His doctrines established by the testimony of His Apostles, plain, sincere, unprejudiced men, the constant companions and confidential friends of the Saviour of the world. They had been from the beginning eye-witnesses of their Master's labours; they had received His heavenly instructions; He had gradually poured the treasures of spiritual knowledge into their minds; and the descent of the Holy Ghost had fully imparted to them all that was necessary, all that was possible for them to know. These men, thus qualified for their task, went forth, ambassadors for Christ; they went forth and preached every where, the LORD working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. These men, with death in its most horrible forms before their eyes, concurred in declaring their firm belief, that He, whom the Jews cru-

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cified

cified and flew, was no other than the eternal Son of God, who came down from heaven, and assumed our nature, not only that He might teach us His true religion, but that He might offer Himself a sacrifice, and make an atonement for our sins. These venerable witnesses declared, at the peril of their lives*, nay, they actually lost their lives by persisting to declare, that they saw the deaf restored to the sense of hearing, the blind to their sight, the lame to the use of their limbs, and even the dead to life, in obedience to Christ's almighty and irresistible command. They declared that they saw their LORD, who had such dominion over death and the grave, voluntarily yield Himself up to the power of death; but, at the time foretold by Himself, bursting its bonds, and rising

* See Dr. Paley on the Evidence of the Christian Religion.

triumphant

triumphant from the grave; and during a continuance of forty days, to the moment of His ascension, giving His disciples every proof of which they were capable, that He whom they saw, and touched, and conversed with, was the same person, whom they had seen put to death by the inveterate malice of the Jews, and the unpardonable compliance and concession of the Roman governor; who determined to release a murderer, and to deliver Jesus to be crucified. On this foundation our religion stands; and the gates of hell will never prevail against it.

But it is time for me now, in compliance with my original design in this work, to give some short account of these two eminent champions for the faith, which our Church calls upon us jointly to commemorate this day: and *therefore*, I presume, jointly commemorated, because an-

cient tradition hath handed down some account of their having both of them on the same day exchanged a state of suffering for a state of glory*.

Of the first of these, St. Simon, we receive but little information from the gospel; except that from his name, the *Zealot*, and also from his being stiled the *Canaanite*, which has been understood in this place to

* Baronius mentions this anecdote, though with some doubt of its authenticity in point of fact. Care must be taken not to confound the Apostle St. Simon with a son of Cleophas of the same name, who succeeded St. James the Just in the superintendence of the Church of Jerusalem, and suffered martyrdom in the 120th year of his age, in the persecution under Trajan.

I know not for what reason the opinion has met with so little countenance, which states that St. Simon and St. Jude were brethren, and both sons of Joseph by a former marriage. "Are not his brethren James, and Josès, and SIMON, and JUDAS?" (Matt. xiii. 55.)

This circumstance, if admitted, would at once point out the propriety, with which the Church has united the commemoration of these Apostles in one festival.

signify

signify zeal and activity, we are led to conclude, that the temper of this Apostle was warm and ardent, zealous and impassioned in advancing the interests, and labouring to promote the success, of the gospel.

After the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, on the day of Pentecost, when they were qualified for the exercise of their ministry, he remained, as we may presume, at Jerusalem, till, for the more wide dissemination of the faith, the Apostles of Christ were dispersed throughout the world, and, as some imagine, went even to the utmost extremities of Europe. Thus were tyrants and persecutors instruments in the hands of the Almighty for the advancement of His sacred truth, till, in spite of the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the Christian Church was firmly established, and became the holy and venerable edifice which we now behold.

Wherever the Apostles went, the religion which they taught triumphed over every obstacle; and their Lord, their faith, their baptism, became known to distant regions—became known to our savage and barbarous ancestors; who, if any credit is to be given to ancient tradition, owe the light of gospel-truth to one of the holy Apostles whom the Church gratefully commemorates this day. It is recorded, on authority which there is every reason to consider as authentic, that St. *Simon*, in the prosecution of his pious labours, came into this our island, then a land of darkness and the shadow of death*; and that, after

* The learned Bishop Taylor, in his *Antiquitates Christianæ*, cites the various testimonies in support of this assertion, and the opinions of learned men on the subject. The following passage from the Greek Menologies is very remarkable—“Υστερον δὲ ἐν ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑ γενόμενος, καὶ πολλὰς τῷ λόγῳ τῇ εὐαγγελίᾳ φασίας ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπίστων σαυρωθεὶς δάπνησαι ἐκεῖ. Men. Gr. ad diem 10 Maii.

considerable success in the work of his ministry, he fell a sacrifice to that zeal, which, to the latest moment, he manifested in the cause of his Blessed Master.

But on this point it is impossible to speak with any degree of certainty; for darkness and impenetrable obscurity veil those great and glorious actions, from which such beneficial consequences were derived to mankind. Far different were the rewards which the blessed Apostles proposed to themselves, by their exertions, from those which result from the approbation and applause of the world, or from the most flattering distinction, which the page of history could confer on them. Their works followed them to those regions of blessedness whither themselves are gone: there they are had in everlasting remembrance—and though we “who are of yesterday, and know nothing,” cannot record those acts of which

we now feel the beneficial consequences, a day is coming, when all that they have done shall be no longer buried in forgetfulness: their works of faith and labours of love shall be recorded before men and Angels, "and then shall every man have praise of God."

Of the other Apostle of this day, St. Jude, we know something more. He calls himself (and he is called of others) the brother of James, and he was probably the son of Joseph. Two other names are likewise assigned him, Lebbaeus, and Thaddæus*, the one expressive of his prudence, the other of his piety. He is frequently mentioned in the Gospel in common with his holy brethren, and more particularly by St. John, on account of the question

* This circumstance, (as well as the surnames of Cephas, Barnabas, Didymus, &c. &c.) tends to confirm the conjecture, that St. Bartholomew and St. Luke, as we have intimated, were known by the respective names of Nathanael and Silas. See pp. 328, 378.

proposed

proposed by him to our LORD before His passion, as to the nature of that manifestation, which should be made to the chosen servants of Christ, and not to the world. He left behind him a Catholic Epistle, inscribed at large to the whole body of Christians; wherein he exhorts them earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints; that faith which is so established and confirmed, as to be worthy of the most strenuous support, and is capable of affording to its professors the most sure ground of success, whenever they are called upon to vindicate the truth and authority of their religion. We find him, in this Epistle, exhorting us to resist, with all our power, the errors and mischievous tenets of such as deny, or wilfully pervert the truth*;

* He had particularly in view the dangerous principles, and the flagitious practices of the Gnostics, the followers of Simon Magus, and the earliest abettors of schism and heresy in the Church.

prescribing, at the same time, that charity for their persons, which is an essential character, and an infallible token of true religion: he directs us to save them, though it be by plucking them, as it were, out of the fire, into which their pride and impiety, and wilful opposition to the truth have cast them.

The scene of this Martyr's sufferings is stated to have been a Persian province, where for some time he preached the gospel with great success; but having endeavoured to withdraw the minds of his hearers from the superstitious ceremonies of their idolatrous priests, he at length experienced their vindictive resentment, and was called to his martyrdom by a cruel and ignominious death.

The improvement which we are required to make of this festival, is to be zealously affected in the cause of our religion;

ligion; frequently to meditate both on its external evidence of miracles and prophecies, and on its internal evidence of most consummate holiness and excellence: to stand forward, on all proper occasions, with fervent zeal to defend that gospel, for which saints and martyrs so chearfully shed their blood: heartily to join in that charitable prayer, which our excellent Liturgy directs us to offer unto GOD; "that all who profess and call themselves Christians may hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life:" not, under a false pretence of zeal, to extinguish every spark of Christian love; nor to promote what is really good by unlawful or unwarrantable means; not to lay too great a stress on the outward circumstantial of religion, and yet highly to reverence the appointed ordinances of Christ, as the best instruments of internal and genuine piety.

We

We must remember, that even truth itself is not to be prosecuted at the expence of Christian meekness and charity: and that, (for our sakes no doubt,) our Blessed Saviour's rebuke of His disciples was recorded, who, with well-meant, but injudicious, zeal for the honour of their Master, were desirous of the power of calling down fire from heaven on His enemies—when He tells them, that they knew not what was the true spirit of the gospel which He taught; and that the Son of Man came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

This is the great design of His gospel; this was the temper and disposition of its divine Author; this was the lesson taught to the first professors of Christianity; whose zeal was tempered with meekness; “the law of kindness was in their lips,” whilst the fire of divine love was kindled in their hearts:

hearts : to the errors of mankind they opposed undaunted firmness ; but they prescribed and practised that universal charity towards all men, which distinguished the character of their Blessed Master, and which will be an undeniable test of the principles of His faithful servants even unto the end of the world.

“ By this shall all men know that ye
 “ are my disciples, if ye have love one to-
 “ wards another.”

*Now to GOD, the FATHER, the SON, and
 the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory,
 adoration and praise, for ever and ever.*

AMEN.

ALL

pointed to the error of mankind they op-
posed unbounded dominion; but they pre-
sented and preached that universal charity
towards all men, which distinguished the
character of their Blessed Master, and
which will be an undeniable test of the
principles of His faithful servants even
unto the end of the world.

For the things which men know, but ye
do not, these things, if ye have love one to
another, shall be made manifest unto you.

For as God, the Father, the Son, and
the Holy Ghost, are in unity and glory,
and love and unity, so we and ye.

And ye shall be one with us, and we shall be
one with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy
Ghost, in unity and glory, and love and unity.

For as the Father loves the Son, and the Son
loves the Father, and the Holy Ghost loves the
Father and the Son, so we love you, and you
love us, and the Holy Ghost loves us and you.

For as the Father sent the Son into the world,
and the Son sent the Holy Ghost into the world,
so we send you, and you send us, and the Holy
Ghost sends us and you.

For as the Father is the Father of the Son,
and the Son is the Son of the Father, and the
Holy Ghost is the Holy Ghost of the Father and
the Son, so we are the brethren of you, and you
are the brethren of us, and the Holy Ghost is the
Holy Ghost of us and you.

For as the Father is the Father of all, and the
Son is the Son of all, and the Holy Ghost is the
Holy Ghost of all, so we are the brethren of all,
and you are the brethren of all, and the Holy
Ghost is the Holy Ghost of all.

For as the Father is the Father of the Son,
and the Son is the Son of the Father, and the
Holy Ghost is the Holy Ghost of the Father and
the Son, so we are the brethren of you, and you
are the brethren of us, and the Holy Ghost is the
Holy Ghost of us and you.

For as the Father is the Father of the Son,
and the Son is the Son of the Father, and the
Holy Ghost is the Holy Ghost of the Father and
the Son, so we are the brethren of you, and you
are the brethren of us, and the Holy Ghost is the
Holy Ghost of us and you.

For as the Father is the Father of the Son,
and the Son is the Son of the Father, and the
Holy Ghost is the Holy Ghost of the Father and
the Son, so we are the brethren of you, and you
are the brethren of us, and the Holy Ghost is the
Holy Ghost of us and you.

ALL SAINTS DAY.

NOVEMBER 1

ALL SAINTS DAY

ALL SAINTS.

REVELATION XIV. 12, 13.

Here is the patience of the Saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD from henceforth"—
"YEA," saith the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours."

OUR Church, which has called upon us to commemorate individually the heroic piety of many holy persons, who boldly encountered death, in confirmation of the gospel, now directs us to consider, in one view, the triumphant faith and re-

ligious fortitude displayed by all the Saints who laid down their lives for the truth: we praise God for his mercy to every one of His servants, whom He was pleased to strengthen and support, as to enable them to persist, undismayed, in their profession of the true faith. Of these speaketh the Holy Ghost to the disciple whom Jesus loved, in the words which I offer to your meditation this day. They are indeed in some measure familiar to your ears, as forming a part of one of the most solemn services of our religion. Often, with this "voice from heaven," does the minister of the gospel pour balm into the wounded spirit, and direct the afflicted to the fountain of everlasting comfort. But they are not confined to the house of mourning: they not only turn out sorrow into joy, but they render our joy more joyful. I have therefore selected them for your consideration,

tion, at the season when we commemorate the blessed consequences of the labours and sufferings of these saints of God—who in life and in death brought victory and glory to the truth, and by means of whom the sound of the gospel went out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world.

Our thankfulness is indeed most powerfully excited on this festival, whereon the examples of all that are gone before us in the fear, and love, and favour of God, are exhibited to us by way of encouragement to engage in the same spiritual warfare, to run the same spiritual course, having in view the same hope of an everlasting crown of righteousness, which the same Lord and Righteous Judge, whom they served, will give to us also in the day of His glorious appearing.

The Collect for this day directs us to consider that mystical union, which it hath

pleased God to ordain in His Church; which is there stiled the Body of Christ, of which Himself is the Head; and of which all who are baptized in His name are the members. This communion and fellowship we are required, as we regard the favour of God, studiously to maintain, and inviolably to preserve; that so there may be no schism in the body. "God is faithful," saith the Apostle, "by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and He immediately adds, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all *speak the same thing*;" that is, that ye preach the same doctrine; that ye profess the same faith; that so there may be no divisions or schisms among you, but "that ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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I need not observe to you, that this earnest exhortation of the Apostle was occasioned by those disputes and contentions, which arose very early in the Christian Church: and which, in a greater or a less degree, have never ceased to disturb or interrupt its peace to the present hour. And from his manner of expressing himself on this subject, we may readily infer the great importance of the duty enjoined: "I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;" to which he adds the ground on which this union is so forcibly recommended: "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,

who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Having thus established His Church on the firm basis of universal charity, and peaceful communion between its several members, Christ hath left no means unemployed "for the *perfecting* the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of His mystical body." Accordingly "He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers;" that they might carry on with united zeal the great work of salvation in which they were employed, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Now if we design to attain that happiness which the blessed Saints now enjoy,

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we must tread in their steps: and, by way of acquiring true firmness and resolution of mind, must propose to our imitation the examples of those holy men gone before us, who, in their respective ages, and under a great variety of circumstances, have given remarkable testimonies of their faith in God, and of their constant adherence to the truth of the gospel. With this view it is, that at certain times are brought forward to our observation the conspicuous virtues of those heroes of Christianity, who sealed, or were ready to seal, their testimony in favour of the truth of the gospel with their blood; and who followed their Saviour in His path of sufferings, towards that crown of glory, which He died to purchase for them.

The time would fail me, were I to attempt to enumerate the instances, which present themselves to our view, of those

Saints of GOD, who suffered the greatest indignities in the best of causes, the worst of torments for the noblest crown. *They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were loaded with darts, they were pierced with spears, they were fastened to the cross, they were beheaded; in a word, they were treated with every species of inhumanity, that the most ingenious malice could invent; yet, under all these sufferings, they were animated and supported, so as chearfully to undergo whatever the good Providence of GOD saw fit, in order to render them eminent instruments of advancing the honour of His gospel, and establishing the truth of His religion.*

When our LORD and Saviour sent His servants on their most important office, He predicted to them their sufferings, and at
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the same time their glory. He told them that in the world they would have tribulation; but He told them also to be of good cheer, for that He had overcome the world. He held out to their enraptured view the bright prospect of eternal felicity—fore-shewed to them, that they should be kings and priests unto God, and should reign for ever and ever: that they should inherit a kingdom, which never should be moved, eternal in the heavens. He bade them “be faithful unto death,” and gave them assurance of the crown of life; a crown differing entirely from the brilliant object of worldly ambition, which has so many thorns intermixed with its jewels. He promised them pleasures, pure, spiritual, intellectual, and unallayed; adequate to their utmost capacity of enjoyment; and worthy of their most refined affections. He promised them a treasure in heaven, which faileth not; a
pearl

pearl of inestimable price, worthy of their utmost exertions to obtain, and purchased with that which alone was equal to its value, the precious blood of the Lamb of God. He called on them, with the eye of faith to behold God: assuring them, that they should hereafter see Him as He is, and be transported with the sight of His resplendent glory: that they should be admitted into His presence, with whom is the fulness of joy; and should pass a blissful eternity in the blessed society of Angels, and with the Spirits of the just made perfect, praising incessantly the great JEHOVAH, God over all.

The happiness of these glorified Saints forms a principal part of the subject of that mysterious book, from which my text is taken, and wherein the Holy of Holies is shadowed out to mankind. There they who overcame, in the glorious conflict on earth,

earth, they who, like their Blessed Master, resisted unto blood, are seen sitting on the throne of Him who likewise overcame, and is Himself seated on the throne of His almighty Father.

Animated by these hopes, the blessed Saints endured all the tortures which the ingenuity of evil men, or the malice of evil spirits could devise. Myriads of pious and eminent Christians fell by the sword of persecution in the three first centuries after the crucifixion of their LORD. Yet the holy religion, which they preached, flourished, and was spread abroad, amidst all these discouragements; and the vineyard which the LORD had planted, being watered with the blood of these His servants, brought forth fruit unto life eternal.

Perfused of the truth of the gospel, and sent to teach others the same, they were alarmed by no dangers, their constancy

stancy rose superior to all opposition. The enemy of man's salvation laboured with the utmost assiduity, to stifle, in the earliest period of its dissemination, a doctrine, the tendency of which was to bruise the serpent's head, to destroy the body of sin, and to overcome the powers of darkness. Therefore were Priests, and Pharisees, and Emperors, exasperated against these holy and harmless souls, whose lives were un-
fullied, whose deportment was peaceable, and whose unbounded charity led them not only to love one another as brethren, but earnestly to desire that their very persecutors might be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. Meanwhile the Almighty, who knew that the adversary would be foiled by the very weapons he was forging, suffered him to try what was "the patience of the saints"—what was their magnanimity, who kept the command-
ments

ments and walked in the faith of Jesus. Thus did it please God to shew the wonderful power of His grace, and to dispose all things for the welfare of His Church, and the praise of His holy name. Thus did the mercy and the wisdom of God overcome the malice and the subtlety of those who opposed the promulgation of the gospel. And the blessed Saints, animated by the hope of glory, beholding the promised reward so strongly presented to the eye of their faith, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. They suffered for the sake of their religion—they suffered readily—they suffered patiently—they suffered joyfully;—they prayed for their murderers—and they bore the cruel indignities of their furious enemies with a meekness, a gentleness, and a forbearance, able to disarm barbarity itself.

If

If we, in these days of comparative peace and security, are not called on to offer to God such a sacrifice as this, in support of His sacred truth, still let us live the life, though we die not the death of martyrs. Let us devote ourselves to the service of true religion; let us be steadfast in the faith of Christ, and let our practice correspond with our belief; and, having done all, let us throw ourselves into the arms of heavenly mercy, and trust in the merits of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of our sins, and the acceptance of our imperfect services.

Let us remember, that the blessed Saints worked out their salvation with earnest care, with zeal and vigilance, with fear and trembling. Heaven is not now more easily to be obtained, than it was in the earlier ages of Christianity. Let us reflect, how much the servants of God then laboured, and let us strictly examine into the state
of

of our own souls. Whether they did *too much* to attain eternal felicity, or we do *too little*, each man's conscience, if he attend to its dictates, will best inform him.

Be it then our especial care not to be ashamed of that gospel for which the Saints were contented to shed their blood; but let us be constant and uniform in our profession of the truth. And if we should at any time be called on to undergo persecution, or reproach, or any distress, on account of our faith, let us cordially forgive, pity, and pray for those that despitefully use us, rejoicing that we are accounted worthy thus far to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus.

— Let us keep it ever imprinted on our remembrance, of how small estimation is human ease and human pleasure in the sight of God, when those whom He best loved, and for whom the brightest crown was preparing, endured such afflictions as

were

were sustained by those, who are with their LORD and Master in His paradise *.

Such honour have all His Saints—so precious in the sight of the LORD were their lives and their deaths: and now are they crowned, and receive palms from the Son of GOD; whom they were not ashamed to confess before men.

But, above all, blessed art thou, O LORD GOD Almighty, and blessed is thy holy name for ever. Thine honour is without end, and thy glory from generation to generation. The inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem--the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven—the spirits of just men made perfect—the glorious company of the Apostles—the goodly fellowship of the Prophets—the noble army of Martyrs praise Thee!

Now to GOD the FATHER, &c.

* See Luke xxiii. 43.

MOVEABLE FEASTS.

1894

1894

THE TRINITY SUNDAY

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TRINITY SUNDAY.

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THE BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF TUNIS
publishing a little out of its course, viz. at the
beginning instead of the end of the year.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

There is a seeming propriety in
calling such that goodly fellowship, that not
only of Christian society, the great object of
our religious faith, the Holy Spirit, and

TRINITY

their belief in this doctrine was the basis
of their joy, their hope, and their confidence.
They lived and died in the full possession
that God the Father called them to that
perfect rest; that God the Son would
right and reward their faithful service; and
that God the Holy Spirit, and that God the Father

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE placing the Discourse on Trinity Sunday a little out of its course, viz. at the beginning instead of the end of the Moveable Festivals, scarcely stands in need of an apology: there is a seeming propriety in connecting with that goodly fellowship, that noble army of Christian heroes, the great object of their invincible faith, the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious TRINITY.

Their belief in this doctrine was the basis of their joy, their hope, and their constancy. They lived and died in the full persuasion, that GOD the FATHER called them to their respective trials; that GOD the SON would accept and reward their perseverance in following His steps; and that GOD the HOLY GHOST would comfort them under all their

ADVERTISEMENT.

sufferings, and render them triumphant over death, though armed with all its terrors. Thus supported, they marched on with that confidence which confounded their adversaries, and wrought conviction and conversion even on the executioners of those sanguinary decrees which aimed at their lives. To this all-glorious BEING they dedicated themselves, their souls and bodies, esteeming nothing dear or precious unto them, by the sacrifice of which they might obtain a better and more glorious resurrection.

TRINITY

TRINITY SUNDAY.

HEBREWS X. 38, 39.

Now *“the just shall live by faith:”* but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul.

THAT *“the just shall live by faith”* is the language both of the Old and New Testament; as is evident to all that are duly conversant with the sacred writings. The Prophet Habakkuk, to whom the words now read to you have a reference, draws the line of distinction between the

humility of the true believer, and the pride of him who refuseth to yield his assent to the oracles of God. *Behold, his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but—the just shall live by his faith.* The Apostle opposes a justifying faith, to the works of the law, which, he says, cannot justify in the sight of God. I hardly need observe to you, how wretchedly this doctrine of faith, as distinguished from works, hath been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Some well-meaning, but mistaken, Christians, finding the Apostle assert, that a man is justified by faith without works, have conceived, that obedience, which is the fruit of faith, is not necessary to salvation: not aware, that St. Paul is speaking only of the works of the Mosaic law; of ritual observances, on which too great stress was laid by those Christians, who were newly converted from Judaism to a belief of the gospel.

gospel. To *these* it is that he says, a man is justified by a lively and effectual faith, productive of holiness in his heart and life; and not by those ceremonial rites, the necessity for which had now ceased, on their reception of Christianity.

The Festival, at which we are now arrived, necessarily directs our thoughts to that great and fundamental article of our Religion, in which the true nature and essence of the God whom we adore is concerned. In the different periods of the year, we consider the wonders of infinite power and wisdom in God the Father; the mercies of redeeming love in God the SON; and the sanctifying influences of divine grace and comfort in God the Holy Ghost. On this solemn Festival, which virtually comprehends all the rest, we profess our belief, that these three Persons are One God; that “in this Trinity none is
before

before or after the other, none is greater, or less than the other; but that the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal; and therefore, that, in all things, at all times, and on all occasions, the Unity of Nature in a Trinity of Persons, and the Trinity of Persons in an Unity of Nature, is to be worshipped." The humble Christian is contented to receive this mystery on the authority of the word of God; without presuming to explain, what is neither necessary nor possible to be fully comprehended by a finite capacity. He knows, that, in our present state, we see divine mysteries, as through a glass, darkly; or, as the original word expresses it*, in an ænigma, from which a certain degree of obscurity is inseparable. He knows, that we are at present in a state of infancy, compared with that perfection, to-

at present • *Ἐν αἰνυμῶσι.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

erected

wards

wards which we are, or should be, advancing: that we now speak on these sublime and mysterious subjects, as children; that we understand them partially, as children; that we think of them imperfectly, as children: that divine and heavenly things we know only in part; that of future events, which are in the hands and at the disposal of God, we can prophesy only in part: but we wait with patience for that hour, when that which is perfect shall come within the reach of our perception, and when that which is known only in part shall be fully revealed; when we shall see the glory of the Almighty, as it were, face to face; and shall know Him, even as we ourselves also are known. In the meanwhile, we must be contented to *walk by faith*; looking forward to that joyful period, when we shall not only know God, which is the highest of all knowledge, but shall

shall know Him As HE is, which is "the glory of that glory."

This is the disposition of the humble Christian, who accepts with implicit reverence the revelation of GOD concerning Himself; and presumes not to bring to the standard of his fallible reason those mysterious truths, which are the objects of faith, but not of unprofitable disquisition.

But it has been said, with an air of levity, and an affectation of wit, ill suited to the importance of the subject, by an excellent poet, but a miserable divine, that to contend about modes of faith, is an argument of senseless bigotry: *that his faith cannot be wrong, whose life is in the right.*

A specious assertion this, flattering to the pride, the presumption, and the indolence of man; his pride, which refuses to bow down itself to the revelation of GOD; his presumption, which induces him to look

He will

into

into the ark of God, with a profane and idle curiosity, and to pronounce decisively upon subjects far above the reach of his boasted reason; and his indolence, which will not suffer him to search the Scriptures, and thoroughly to inform himself, whether that which he is required to believe is, or is not, the plain, consistent, and obvious sense of those Scriptures. It would have been much nearer the truth to have said, *that his life cannot be right, whose faith is in the wrong*: and therefore we cannot without much sorrow hear it asserted, that *for points of faith*, (which are softened into matters of speculation and mere opinion,) no concern whatever should be had, no civil distinctions should be made on account of them, no interference whatsoever of authority should take place.

If faith be the foundation, of which practice is the superstructure, it is needless

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to say, that where the foundation is faulty and treacherous, all that is raised upon it, must of necessity be unstable, and become the sport of every wind and tempest. The true believer contends not about this or that *mode of faith*, as did the Gentiles, who had gods many, and lords many; for he knows of no faith but *one*: the faith for which he contends, is that once delivered to the saints; and for this he desires *earnestly* to contend, and to transmit it, as far as his influence extends, pure and undefiled to future generations. He knows, that without faith, without that faith, the object of which is the One only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, besides whom there is no other God, it is *impossible to please Him*: and this is the faith, by which he trusts he shall be justified; by which he hopes he shall live eternally, and in the profession of which he is willing and desirous

serious to die. He does not confound an article of faith with a matter of opinion, that he may treat them both with equal indifference: he considers faith to be the gift of God, and he humbly and earnestly addresseth himself to Heaven for a gift so valuable, so important to his acceptance with his Maker. He joins with fervency in that prayer, which we have all of us presented this day before the throne of grace, that God would *keep him steadfast in this faith*; and would not expose him to the danger of being tossed to and fro on the waves of scepticism and error. He prays to be defended from all adversity, and more immediately from that calamity which includes every other, a calamity not to be either endured or conceived, the displeasure of God.

The Apostle, in the words of the text, declares, *if any man draw back from the profession.*

profession of that faith, by which the just shall live, *my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* He could have no satisfaction in one whom he beheld departing from the truth; because he could not but see that he was falling under the displeasure of Heaven. But *we*, he adds, with grateful reliance on the mercy and grace of God, *we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul.* We are not as the seed sown amongst barren rocks: we are not of the number of those, who having, for a time, risen superior to early prejudices and delusions, and having embraced the doctrines of truth, do, in times of persecution, fall away from the faith, and relapse into their former errors. In this number he rejoices that neither himself nor his Hebrew converts, whom he is addressing, are included. He declares, that destruction and unhappiness are

are in the way of such, as have wilfully erred from the paths of truth and righteousness.

In another passage, indeed, he tells us, that they are not only in danger of being lost, but of being lost beyond the hope of recovery: for he says, that *it is impossible* (meaning, in the *ordinary* course of things, and under the *ordinary* means of conviction; for with God all things are possible; but, that, humanly speaking, *it is impossible*, according to the terms of *covenanted* mercy,) *for those, who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.* Need I observe to you how nearly those persons

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approach

approach to the guilt of them that crucified our Saviour as a blasphemer, for declaring Himself equal with God, who impiously misrepresent Him as a mere fallible man, like ourselves, and deny Him every attribute belonging to His nature, as Very and Eternal JEHOVAH. O my soul, pity their blindness, but abhor their unbelief! unto the assembly of such misguided persons, mine honour be not thou united, for in the presumption of their hearts, they dishonour the Son of God, reviling the doctrine of His Divinity; and in their arrogance and self-will they sap the very foundation of our religion, and rob us of its most essential comforts.

We, I trust, have not so imperfectly learned our duty, as to be removed from our faith by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness of those, that are indefatigable in their endeavours to deceive the ignorant,

ignorant, and to seduce the unwary. We know the danger and the mischief of listening to such, as corrupt the word of God, and make it speak a language, which none of our fathers understood it to speak; and to inculcate a doctrine directly opposite to that, for which they were contented to die. We know, that as there is but One true God, there can be but One true faith; that we must not only believe that *He is*; but must believe Him to be such as He hath revealed Himself to the children of men.

Having imbibed right principles of faith from the fountain of the sacred oracles of truth, we must maintain them with steadfastness to the end of our lives; and, above all, we must adorn the doctrines which we profess, by the virtues in which we are continually striving to excel. Thus shall we not merely believe, not merely yield

an unprofitable assent to certain truths, which we suffer not to influence our conduct; but shall so believe in God, as to fear and love Him; to worship and obey Him; to trust in His mercy, and adore His power. We shall "believe, to the saving of the soul." Our faith will be seen productive of those virtues and graces, which distinguish and adorn the Christian character. The word of the Lord will then have free course among us; it will be fairly and candidly interpreted. We shall open the sacred volume, deeply impressed with a sense of His infinite goodness, who hath given us such a lamp for our feet, and such a light for our paths: we shall open it, not to cavil, but adore. Armed with this impenetrable shield of faith, we shall be proof against the assaults either of unreasonable or of wicked men: we shall be enabled to give an answer to
such,

such, as enquire of us concerning the grounds of our faith, or the foundation of our hope. And when they behold us acting conformably to the dictates of both, they will be constrained to declare, "that God is in us of a truth." They will behold our conversation, the transcript of the faith which we profess: they will be led to admire the power of divine grace in us, equally influencing our hearts to the belief of the truths, and our wills to the observance of the precepts, of the gospel.

Great indeed are our encouragements to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. The Apostle assures us, that so long as we continue to do this, we are made partakers of Christ; we are rendered capable objects of His mercy now, and shall be admitted to the participation of His glory hereafter; where, with Angels, and Archangels, and with all the company of

Heaven, we shall be permitted to adore and magnify His glorious name, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, which was, and which is, and which is to come: heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory, by whom all things were created, by whom all mankind was redeemed, and by whom thine elect are sanctified in this world, and will be glorified for ever in the next.

To which Holy, Blessed, and Undivided TRINITY, Three Persons, and One GOD, be all honour, and glory, and praise, in the Church Militant on earth, and in the Church Triumphant in heaven to all eternity. AMEN.

made partakers of Christ; we are rendered capable objects of His mercy now, and shall be admitted to the participation of His glory hereafter; where, with Angels, and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven,

EASTER DAY.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

FROM THE REFORMATION

TO THE PRESENT TIME

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE FIRST VOLUME

FROM THE REFORMATION

TO THE PRESENT TIME

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE SECOND VOLUME

FROM THE REFORMATION

TO THE PRESENT TIME

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE THIRD VOLUME

FROM THE REFORMATION

TO THE PRESENT TIME

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE FOURTH VOLUME

FROM THE REFORMATION

TO THE PRESENT TIME

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE FIFTH VOLUME

FROM THE REFORMATION

TO THE PRESENT TIME

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE SIXTH VOLUME

FROM THE REFORMATION

EASTER DAY,

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 3, 4.

For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures: And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.

THE present high and holy Festival, which puts a new song into our mouths, even a thanksgiving unto our God, requires us to celebrate that wondrous display of almighty power, whereby the LORD of Life and Death was raised from the grave. We welcome His return
from

from the sepulchre, having loosed the bands of death, by which it was impossible for Him to be holden. The Apostle here reminds the Corinthians, that he had considered the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, as the basis of all his other instructions: "I delivered to you, *first of all*, this most important doctrine, which I also received, either from Christ Himself at the moment of my miraculous conversion, or from his holy prophet, who was sent to restore my sight, and to confirm me in my new profession."

The Apostle was fully aware of the force of his own argument; "If Christ be not risen, there is no resurrection;" and if this be the case, then is our preaching vain, and the faith of our hearers is also vain; then are ye yet in your sins; then are they perished, who are fallen asleep in Christ; and then are ye, the despised
 most professors

professors of a persecuted religion, of all men most miserable. We see, at once, how necessary was their absolute conviction of the truth of this fact, in order to support the first preachers of the gospel under the sufferings, to which they were about to be exposed. We see how needful it was, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ should be insisted on, as the cause, the pattern, the pledge and the assurance of that of every true believer; which will as necessarily take place, as the effect follows its proper cause; or as the succeeding harvest, under the law, followed the oblation of the first fruits.

The text repeatedly assures us, that all which the LORD did for our salvation was *according to the Scriptures*. The great event of this day had been foreshewn in types, and foretold in prophecies. The restoration of Jonah, after a burial of three days

days and three nights, is applied by our Saviour Himself to his own approaching resurrection; and his allusion to it at once establishes the fact, and justifies the interpretation. The prophecy in the sixteenth Psalm is so expressly applicable to this subject, that the enemies of Christianity have bestowed all their artifice to corrupt the text, and make it speak in general terms what only belonged to the Holy One of GOD. "*Thou wilt not,*" saith the Psalmist in the person of Christ, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer THINE HOLY ONE to see corruption**: which St. Peter, in his celebrated discourse

* No person acquainted with the Hebrew language needs to be informed, that, to insert the letter י in the word תניח, "thine Holy One," and to read it תניחי, would at once take away its appropriate sense, and give it a general application to *the Saints* at large. But whoever will consult Dr. Kennicott's observations on this passage, will see the fraud completely detected, and the original text as completely established.

to the Jews, shews was applicable to Christ alone.

I forbear to dwell longer on the proof of what, I trust, we all acknowledge to be true; since without it, we have no solid ground of consolation in our present state, nor any hopes of glory in a future world. Our time may be more usefully employed, in considering how we may best improve the blessings of this day. The Apostle hath given us a short, but full, instruction upon this point: "If Christ, your head, be risen, ye, his members, are risen together with Him:" that is, your resurrection must and will be consequent upon it: "If ye then," says he, "be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Live henceforth to His glory, through the power of whose resurrection,

rection, ye are encouraged to hope, that ye shall live eternally in a better world. We are animated with a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, of an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, which never shall fade away, reserved in heaven for us.

A full persuasion of this truth will be instead of a thousand arguments to induce us so to live, that we may not be disappointed of our hope. We shall at once admit the force of the Apostle's reasoning: How can we, who, through the death and resurrection of Christ, are become dead unto sin, live wilfully any longer therein? How can we suffer sin to reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof? The Saviour of mankind, rising triumphant from the grave, calls upon us, in language too forcible to be resisted, to arise and come away from the
neighbour-

neighbourhood of the regions of death;
“to-day, therefore, if ye will hear His
voice, harden not your hearts!”
“Together with the LORD our Saviour,
all nature, the work of His hands, seems
to call on us, at this time, to arise from
death unto life, from sin to righteousness.
For, lo! the winter is past; the storms are
over and gone; the flowers appear on the
earth; the time of the singing of birds is
come. The springing forth of the seed
sown on the earth hath been often applied
to that precious seed, which, at this season,
having been buried for a time in the earth,
sprang up and brought forth fruit, even a
plentiful harvest of salvation to the sons of
men. There is indeed a renewal of all
things round about us, which loudly ad-
monishes us to be renewed in the spirit of
our minds; and that cheerfulness, which
prevails through universal nature, leads us

to a grateful consideration of His goodness, which, without reserve, extends itself to all His works. If then to lie dead, and buried in the grave of sin; if to prefer the frozen state of nature before the lively, vigorous, and active state of grace and virtue be ever more than commonly inexcusable, surely it is now; when the Sun of Righteousness is risen upon us, and all its cheering and reviving influence is spread around us; when the barrenness and inclemency of winter are exchanged for the verdure, the beauty and fertility of the spring: the clouds of God's wrath are blown over and gone; no longer is the world involved in darkness and misery: the rays of divine light are extended far and wide; and all the dreary circumstances of indignation from heaven, and tribulation upon earth, give place to the full dispensation of grace and mercy.

With

With grateful hearts then we reflect, that, according to the Apostle's declaration, "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus:" but we are never to forget what is immediately subjoined, by way of explanation; to "them which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Herein you will observe an immediate connection of our duty with our privileges. We are told, indeed, that this was the principal design of Christ's coming in the flesh, and condemning sin by the sacrifice of Himself, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in them, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Whence it appears, that the great and glorious things, which the Son of God hath done for mankind, are not intended to excuse His followers from action, but to enable them for it, and to render them successful in it.

To follow the dictates of that carnal mind, which neither is nor can be subject to the law of God, would be such an abuse of mercy, as must needs render the cross of Christ of no effect to our salvation: rather doth it become still more our duty to pray, that the Spirit of Him that raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead, may quicken our souls unto all holiness and active obedience now, that hereafter He may raise us up to life everlasting, when He shall appear in His glorious majesty to judge the world.

We know, that the resurrection of the soul from sin to holiness in this world is no more possible to be effected by us, unassisted by the grace of God, than it would be possible for us to collect, digest and replace the scattered particles of our earthly frame, and present ourselves alive, through our own strength, before His judgment-seat

at

at the last day. They are each of them the work of an almighty Being : and, as our creation is ascribed to God the Father, and our recovery from sin and death to God the Son, so are our regeneration and renewal in grace and goodness effected by the sanctifying influence of God the Holy Ghost, working in us to will and to do that which is acceptable in His sight. When the affections of our minds are changed from the love and pursuit of sin, to the love and practice of holiness, it is considered in the holy Scripture as a "new creation," and that as much the work of God, as man's original creation out of the dust of the earth. Hence the Psalmist's prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Grant that the corrupt affections of the "old man" may die in me, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in me.

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If then this change, or rather this new creation, must take place in us, in order to the accomplishment of our salvation; and if this cannot be effected without the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, what remains, but that we earnestly apply to the Lord of all power and might, for such a measure of His grace, as will best enable us to answer the purposes of divine mercy towards us? And how can we address the Majesty of Heaven with greater energy and effect, than in that most sacred ordinance of our religion, which, on this particular Festival, the authority of our Sovereign, the constitutions of the Church, and the precepts of the Gospel concur in requiring us most devoutly to observe? Strengthened and supported

"In every Parish-Church or Chapel where Sacraments are to be administered within this realm, the Holy Communion shall be ministered by the Parson, Vicar, or Minister, so often, and at such times, as every

supported by the means of grace and salvation, we should have no cause to urge the weakness of our nature, or the power of temptation, or the difficulty of our duties: all these excuses fall at once to the ground, when it is remembered, how infinitely greater is He that is for us, than they that are against us: and how effectual are the institutions of our holy religion, as well to our sanctification in this life, as to our everlasting salvation in a better.

The astonishing event of this day affords us the noblest demonstration of the majesty and truth of God. The former appears in His absolute dominion over the powers of darkness; the latter in the exact accomplishment of all, which had been fore-

every Parishioner may communicate at the least thrice in the year, *whereof the Feast of EASTER to be one*, according as they are appointed by the Book of Common Prayer." Can. xxi.

shadowed and foretold, concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We behold, on this joyful occasion, the debt to divine justice fully discharged; the sting of death taken away; and our departure out of this world rendered a safe and easy passage to eternal life. Through the infinite merits of Christ's death and resurrection, the true believer, when on the confines of another world, looking up to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his Faith, foresees, that the stroke which he is about to receive, and which makes him feel that he is mortal, will consign him to the regions of immortality; and in this confidence his soul takes her flight to his Redeemer's bosom, with this triumphant exclamation, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

If then it is our duty to bless God for the mercies of Christ's death, how much
more

more is He to be adored and praised for the glories of Christ's resurrection! But the most lively sense of the importance of this event will not avail us, if it does not lead to that first resurrection from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, which is preparatory to our second resurrection from the mansions of the grave, to the regions of light and glory. When we consider the resurrection of Christ as introductory to the general resurrection at the last day, we must infer the necessity of our so conducting ourselves in this world, as to be enabled to lift up our heads with joy in that hour, wherein all that sleep in their graves shall awake, and stand up from the dead; when Christ, the great Angel of the Covenant, shall appear, attended with thousand thousands of ministering spirits; when the heavens being on fire shall be

H h 4

dissolved,

dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

Amidst the terrors of that awful day, they, who have lived in the true faith and fear of God, shall stand undismayed; and from their joyful lips that song of triumph shall echo through the courts of Heaven;

“ Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God, day and night.

“ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”

Now to GOD, the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, Three Persons and One GOD, be all praise and dominion, world without end. AMEN.

ASCENSION

ASCENSION DAY.

ASCENSION DAY.

NO words could be pronounced
then that new dawn with its com-
fort the hearts of the faithful
under the inspiration of those discourses
which they were likely to meet with in the
propagation of the gospel. A great
certainty was given; the path was plain
and dangerous though it was; and
to rise, they stood in great need of a
Counselor who would guide them in the
road.

ASCENSION DAY.

St. JOHN XVI. 7.

—It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.

NO words could be better calculated than these now before you, to comfort the hearts of the disciples of Christ, under the apprehension of those difficulties, which they were likely to meet with in the promulgation of the gospel. The prospect certainly was gloomy; the path was dark and dangerous through which they were to pass; they stood in great need of a *Comforter*, who should enable them to proceed

ceed with confidence in the way of their duty. *These things* (said their gracious LORD) *I tell you beforehand, that when they come to pass, ye may not be offended: They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth GOD service.*

“Is this then, (might they well be supposed to ask,) is this the reward of our attachment to the person, and of our zeal in the service, of our Master? Is it for this, that we have forsaken all the little that we had, and followed Him? We thought, indeed, that He would have assumed to Himself a glorious kingdom; we trusted that it had been He, that should have redeemed Israel from the Roman yoke, and have delivered His people from the tyranny of Caesar: but now, alas! we find, that bonds and imprisonment await us, and even the terrors of death itself!” Such probably were

the sentiments of persons, awakened to a lively sense of their own perilous situation, and not sufficiently acquainted with the spirituality of Christ's redemption; nor sufficiently aware, that the purpose of His coming was to deliver them and all mankind from a much more grievous yoke, than that imposed upon them by the Romans; from a much more imperious dominion, than that of Cæsar: from the bondage of sin, from the tyranny of Satan, and from the terrors of the wrath of Almighty God.

“In this their perplexity, the Saviour of the world interposes that consolation, which is only to be derived from *Him*, and from the religion which He taught. He had said, in a former part of this His farewell discourse with His disciples; *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I;*

by which our Saviour by no means intends to countenance the notion of an inequality in the divinity of the Father and the Son; but only intimates, that the glory which He would resume on His ascension into heaven, and which was obscured by the veil of His humanity, was infinitely greater, than His state of humiliation upon earth, even amidst all the miracles which He wrought, could give them any conception of: and He promises His followers a participation of the same glory; but He shews them, that they could not be supported in their pursuit of this heavenly blessing, unless He were taken away from them. *It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.*

The history of the first ages of the Christian Church fully verifies what is here

said

said of the assistance, which the faithful followers of their Blessed Master were encouraged to expect. We know that they were wonderfully enabled to encounter the utmost malice of their adversaries, and to meet the king of terrors without dismay: strengthened by that faith which overcometh the world, and supplied with that supernatural fortitude, whereby they were triumphant, they were unshaken, they were more than conquerors, in the severest trials.

Hence it appears, that our Lord's departure from His disciples was an act of extraordinary loving-kindness and peculiar mercy; since, without His ascension into heaven, to prepare a place for our reception, the work of our redemption had been incomplete. *In my Father's house, says He, are many mansions.* O joyful assurance, that many will be the inhabitants of those blissful regions! And who will not watch, and

and strive, and pray, that he may be of that blessed number? *I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.*

- This consideration, that He, who is our Head, is ascended, and that we, His members, shall follow in due time, renders the present Festival extremely interesting to the Christian Church. With an eye of faith she beholds the Conqueror of sin and death ascending up on high; she beholds the adversary of God and men led captive; and acknowledging the divine supremacy of the Man Christ Jesus; she is ready to join in that song of exultation, which welcomes her Lord and Saviour to the realms of bliss: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory, the LORD, strong, and mighty in battle, shall come in.* But, above all, she

is anxious to prepare her children, during the time of their probation upon earth, in heart and mind to ascend whither her Lord and Saviour is gone before; looking forward with an holy confidence to that blissful hour, when He, whose ascension to be our Mediator at the right hand of God we this day thankfully commemorate, shall descend from heaven to be our Judge: when they who have died in the faith of Christ shall first be raised unto life; and afterwards they which shall be *alive and remain*, shall be *caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall they be ever with the Lord.*

Well may the Apostle add, to this magnificent description of the last day, *Wherefore comfort one another with these words: as if he had said, Let not your hearts be troubled; believe ye in God, believe also*

in Christ: be assured, that whatever evils may befall you by the way, all will be peace, and joy, and satisfaction at the end thereof: your trial can be but momentary, your recompence, through His merits, will be everlasting.

But that which best deserves our consideration, because it is of the highest importance to our happiness, is the necessity under which we lie of labouring to attain that holy disposition of mind, whereby *our* ascension towards heaven may be begun, even whilst we live, and the affections of the soul may be winged for her flight towards the regions of glory, whilst her sluggish companion, the body, is destined to sojourn upon earth. This disposition is so far from being inconsistent with the reasonable enjoyment of the blessings of the present world, that, by regulating the affections, it serves only to render our happiness on earth as pure

as any thing which human existence can supply. It serves only to restrain those intemperate fallies of unbridled appetite, which are so adverse to our *real* happiness, that the man who has been devoted to sinful pleasures, if he be honest and ingenuous, will tell you he is, and has ever been, a stranger to joy. It enables us to receive the mercies of heaven, not only as gracious accommodations in our passage through this world, but as an earnest and a foretaste of those unspeakable glories, which God hath prepared for them that love Him. And if we are called on to suffer affliction, if adversities and calamities should befall us, the heavenly disposition, of which we are speaking, will blunt the edge of the sharpest sufferings, by suggesting to us that *our home is not on earth*; that *our abiding-place is in heaven*; and that if we have secured an interest in the

redemption wrought for us by Christ, our present sufferings, which are but for a moment, will work out for us an eternal and exceeding weight of glory.

Supported with such hopes as these, the noble army of Martyrs, the glorious company of the Apostles, and the goodly fellowship of the Prophets which were before them, with confidence opposed the enemies of the truth, at the hazard of every thing that was dear to them in this world: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword, they were destitute, afflicted, tormented, they knew that He, who, in His infinite wisdom, had thought fit to show them great and sore troubles, would one day quicken them again, and bring them up again from the depths of the earth; yea more, that He would set them at His own right hand, in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and make them

them partakers of His everlasting kingdom.

The last attendants of their Lord and Saviour on mount Olivet had seen Him ascend towards that place, which had been the immediate residence of His glory, before the foundations of the world were laid: and, in all their subsequent conflicts with the enemies of that gospel, which they were commissioned to publish to the world, they, with a faith similar to that of the first martyr St. Stephen, *looked up to heaven, and beheld the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.* The passage thither they well knew was open, even to mortals like themselves: they were convinced of the possibility of this by the translation of *Enoch*, who *walked with God*, and suddenly disappeared, without suffering death; *for God took him:* and they were farther convinced by the ascen-

sion of the prophet *Elijah*, carried by a whirlwind into heaven. But that which they had *heard with their ears*, and *their fathers had told them*, they had the privilege of beholding, with amazement, actually accomplished before their eyes: and if they had been disposed to question the evidence of their sight, they had the farther testimony of two Angels, who bore witness to the astonishing fact. *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.* He ascended in a cloud; and *Behold*, saith St. John, in the book of Revelation, *He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him,*

This then is the basis of the Christian's hope; here may his anchor be safely cast; no storms or tempests can drive him from

that

that state of tranquillity, which this article of our Christian faith, our LORD's ascension to His Father and our Father, to His GOD and our GOD, administers to him in the hour of adversity.

Let it then be the prevailing desire of our hearts, and the governing principle of our lives, to become possessed of that holy frame of mind, which is suited to our prospect of a blessed immortality. Nothing will be so likely to produce this effect, as a diligent attendance on the sacred ordinances of our Religion; and of all other services, none will so much conduce to raise our affections to the things above, as that wherein we commemorate His love, who died, and rose again, and is gone into heaven to make intercession for us.

To Him let us draw nigh, in full assurance of faith, that He will hear our prayers, and accomplish the desire of our

souls: more especially, when we implore that heavenly-mindedness, which this Festival so powerfully recommends, and for which the Collect for this day instructs us to ask, in terms meet to be spoken by the Christian to his God:

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thine only-begotten Son our LORD JESUS CHRIST to have ascended into the Heavens: so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with THEE and the HOLY GHOST, One God, blessed for evermore. AMEN.

WHITSUNDAY.

WHITSUNDAY

They who are exposed to sorrow
and calamity of a Com-

WHITSUNDAY.

For they whose understanding is
unable to be raised above the spirit
of darkness for their direction. This was the

St. JOHN XIV. 15, 16, 17.

*If ye love me, keep my commandments. And
I will pray the Father, and He shall give
you another Comforter, that He may abide
with you for ever; even the Spirit of
Truth—*

IT is evidently the design of this grand
Festival, to instruct us in the nature,
the office, the gifts and the fruits of the
Holy Ghost. The words of the text de-
scribe Him under two characters, each of
them very interesting and important to
every member of the Christian Church.
He is called a *Comforter*, and the *Spirit of
Truth*.

Truth. They who are exposed to sorrows and calamities, stand in need of a *Comforter*; and they whose understanding is liable to be misled, have need of *the Spirit of Truth* for their direction. This was the case with the persons, to whom the Saviour of the world thus affectionately addresses Himself, before His departure from them. He foresaw the trials, to which their faith and constancy would be exposed: and *the Spirit of Truth* is promised to confirm them in the former; the *Spirit of Consolation* to support them under the latter—to sustain them in all the adversities, which their profession of a persecuted religion might bring upon them.

But it is highly worthy of your observation, in what manner this gracious promise is introduced: and you will do well to remember the previous condition of our Saviour's intercession, and of the dispensation
of

of this most excellent gift of God. “*If ye love me, (and certainly many of those, to whom our Saviour here addresses Himself, had professed to love Him,) demonstrate the sincerity of your love by your obedience to my commandments: thus, and thus only, will ye be entitled to the benefits of my mediation with the Father in your behalf: thus, and thus only, will ye be capable of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost; who can no more reside in the impure tabernacle of a rebellious heart, than light can have fellowship with darkness, or God with Belial.*”

The passage of Scripture before us, then, seems to point out to us: First, the preparation of the heart in man to receive the great benefit which we this day commemorate, as having been miraculously conferred on the Apostles; and which is here prom-
mised

mitted to be a permanent blessing to the Church of Christ.

Secondly, The all-powerful intercession of our heavenly Advocate with God the Father, in behalf of such as love Him, and keep His commandments.

Thirdly, The unspeakable blessing comprehended in the name and character of the divine person here promised to the Christian Church, as its Comforter, never to be taken away from it, but to abide with it for ever. And,

Lastly, The excellence of such a guide as is here described, under the title of the *Spirit of Truth*.

First, then, let us consider the preparation of the heart necessary for the reception of the heavenly Guest here promised: *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. It is an easy thing for a man to say, with St. Peter, *LORD, thou knowest that I love thee*:

but the proof and test of that love is our willing and active obedience to the divine will. Professions may be sincere, or they may be entirely otherwise: we can have no doubt of their truth, when the practice corresponds with them. If then we behold the professor of Christianity watchful over his conduct, and sincerely exercised to *have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man*; we cannot entertain a doubt, that this person really feels the love which he professeth: we cannot doubt, that such an one hath made a choice as wise as it is advantageous: that he hath *vouched the LORD to be his God*, and hath resolved to dedicate the best affections of his soul to *His* honour and service: that he no longer considers the world, with its riches, its honours, or its pleasures, as principally worthy of his regard; but looks up to the glories of that eternal world

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which

which are prepared for us hereafter, as the object most highly deserving his attention and pursuit; and to the all-gracious Dispenser of them; as the sum of all perfection; as infinitely amiable in Himself, and as having every possible claim to the most fervent and devout affections of our hearts.

Secondly, For such as these it is, that the all-powerful Mediator betwixt God and man hath, in the words before us, graciously promised to intercede: *If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father.* “So long as ye live in an avowed opposition to my will and commandments, ye have no pretensions to my intercession in your behalf. God heareth not wilful sinners; neither can any mediation in their favour be accepted: sin unrepented of can find no degree of patronage, nor any thing short of abhorrence at my hands. But if, having departed from the
way

way of my commandments, ye return to me with your whole heart, with full purpose of amendment of life, *I will pray the Father*; and He shall send you another Comforter; even His Holy Spirit of Grace, to give vigour to your resolutions, and activity to your endeavours. The comfort which you have hitherto received from my presence and instructions is now about to be withdrawn from you: *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more*: but let not your heart be troubled at this saying, neither let it be afraid! It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you: another Comforter will be sent to you on my departure, who shall not leave you, as I am about to do, but shall abide with you for ever; for in the unity of that Holy Spirit, I am with my Church always, even unto

he end of the world: ready to administer to the spiritual necessities of all that call upon me in their time of need: to enlighten the ignorant; to support the weak; to correct what is amiss; to supply what is wanting; to comfort the feeble-minded; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones: to incline my servants, first, to *chuse* and *prefer*, and then to *perform* and *accomplish* that which is good: to open their eyes, that they may behold and receive the things which belong to their present peace, and to their future happiness: to incline their ears to listen to the terms, on which salvation is offered to them in the gospel; and to enable them with steadfast confidence to pursue the path, which that gospel pointeth out to their steps. In a word, to make them such as it is their duty to be, *in all holy conversation and godliness*; and to teach them that (de-
nying

how shall we hope to be numbered with the Saints in glory everlasting? But let us not be tempted to despair: for thousands now in bliss and glory had once the same difficulties to master that we have: they lived in the same valley of tears, and were set to strive with the same unruly passions. Now the same gracious God who enabled them to overcome will strengthen us in like manner. Therefore let us regard our own interest, which is no hard command—obey our Maker's voice—love entirely our Blessed Redeemer—and the grace of God will work all good works in us.

PITY, O LORD, and cure the blindness of thy creatures, who live below in the dark, still seeking rest, but finding none, until they seek it in Thee. O take away that veil that blinds our eyes; and let us see that there is a better world than this; a happier people than those we know: for how glorious is the kingdom of heaven, where our LORD reigns in the midst of His Saints! O let us look up with the eye of faith, and see a glorious place, incomparably beyond the courts of kings! Grant, O gracious God, that we may tread in the steps of all those that are departed hence in thy faith and fear. Let us learn of them to be humble and meek; to submit, like them, to the will of Heaven; to

govern our senses by the rules of reason, and our reason by the dictates of religion.

Through the grace of God in Christ Jesus we hope one day to dwell above: meanwhile let us join our voices with their hymns, and say, "Salvation, to our GOD, who sitteth on the throne, and to the LAMB that redeemed us with His blood."

HALLELUJAH. AMEN.

IT is recorded of the blessed Apostles of our LORD, that they hazarded their lives among barbarous nations, rejected the flatteries of the world, and fought the good fight of faith, before they were called from their painful labours on earth, to a blissful rest in heaven. Let us rejoice that we have so many examples of good men set before our eyes, who loved their Lord and Master Jesus Christ more than all the friendship of the world, nay, than their own lives. Thrice happy are we, if in a right manner we celebrate their festivals, and follow their blessed steps in virtuous and godly living: then shall we also come to those unspeakable glories which they now enjoy, and which are prepared for all those who, like them, unfeignedly love God.

And

INTRODUCTION.

THE Author hopes he shall be pardoned for expressing his wish that, in cases where attendance on the public worship is (from necessity, and not otherwise) impracticable on any Festival, his readers will employ a portion of their time in joining the Services of the Church, and the appropriate Lecture, to their ordinary devotions: to which he ventures to recommend as an addition, the Meditations and Prayers which are here subjoined, extracted from a work he has the highest pleasure in recommending to the attention of the pious Christian*, as an excellent manual of private devotion.

* "THE PIOUS COUNTRY PARISHIONER instructed " how to spend every Day through the whole Course of his " Life in a religious and acceptable Manner." Printed for F. and C. RIVINGTON, Booksellers to *The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*. 22d Edition.

MEDI-

MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS

FOR

SAINTS DAYS.

HOW should we bless and praise God, who has instructed his holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of the Apostles, and has not abandoned us to the dim light of our own reason, but in the holy Scriptures has graciously revealed whatever is necessary for us to believe and practise in order to our eternal salvation!

LORD, grant that we may with diligence apply ourselves to the reading of these sacred volumes. Give us grace to commemorate with all thankfulness the heroic piety of the Saints, who served the LORD in hunger and thirst, in racks and in tortures, and who encountered death without fear.

We rejoice in the happiness that they are advanced to: but what shall we do that we may partake with them of the heavenly kingdom! How shall we, who are but dust and ashes, and who are oppressed with the burden of our sins; how

nying *ungodliness and worldly lusts*) it behoves them to *live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*

All this is included in the character of that Divine Person, whom the Saviour of mankind here promises to His disciples under the stile and title of THE COMFORTER : to which He adds another character, that of *the Spirit of Truth* ; in contradistinction to the spirit of error and delusion, which too often worketh in the children of disobedience ; misleading their judgment, perverting their understanding, and seducing their will ; misrepresenting the plainest precepts ; mis-stating the most obvious and intelligible truths ; misinterpreting the simplest declarations of the word of GOD, to support some previous misconception, or some unhappy prejudice against the truth. To obviate such a complication of mischiefs, *the Spirit of Truth*

is here promised by Christ to His Church; to inform the understanding, to rectify the judgment, to regulate the will, and to controul the affections: to give us a clear perception of the nature and extent of our duty, and also a sincere and honest desire to perform it: to represent things to our minds in their true colours; and induce us to set a proportionate value on the transitory possessions of the present world, and the glories reserved for us in the world to come. This it is to be under the guidance of the *Spirit of Truth*; and this it is which we are directed to ask, in that admirable form of prayer appropriated to this season; in which we acknowledge, that the gracious design of our merciful God, in sending the light of His Holy Spirit, was to "teach the hearts of His faithful people;" and in which we implore the assistance of the same Spirit "to give us a right judgment

ment in all things" which relate to our eternal welfare, that we may "rejoice evermore in His holy comfort."

We have now considered the several particulars of the words of the text, and we learn from them, that if we would receive the benefit of our Saviour's intercession, we must love God, and keep His commandments: we may then with humble confidence expect, that His goodness, whose love towards mankind was even stronger than death, will still be continued to us, though He is in His kingdom of glory. He will there pray the Father to look with mercy upon us, and to vouchsafe us whatever will be most conducive to our present and eternal welfare. In particular, He will, by His all-prevailing intercession, obtain for us the *ordinary* assistance of that Holy Spirit, which was, as on this day, *miraculously* bestowed on the Apostles. The

assistance

extra-

extraordinary dispensation of the gift of languages, which was to enable the first preachers of the gospel to publish it with such astonishing rapidity to the different nations of the world, is not necessary now, and therefore is not to be expected by us: but the gentle, yet continual, the imperceptible, yet effectual, influences of that holy inspiration, by which alone we are enabled to think those things which are good; and the constant direction of that heavenly Guide, by which we are enabled to perform that which is required; these are now, and will be, necessary in every age, and every nation, and in every period of the world, so to conduct us *through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.*

It remains, therefore, for our consideration, *how* this great and unspeakable blessing may be obtained; the comfort and assistance

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ERRATUM.

P. 315. line 19. For *secure*, read *ensure*.

LECTURES

And what hinders us from attaining the same happiness? They, who now reign in Heaven, once, like us, lived in this valley of tears, and strove with the same temptations. Let us be followers of them, as they were of Christ. Let us be courageous in the profession of the truths of the gospel. Let us be contented to pass through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report for righteousness' sake, and we shall rest with them. For we profess the same religion with these Saints—we partake of the same holy sacraments—we are nurtured in the same apostolic faith—we are redeemed with the same inestimable price. God, who enabled them to overcome, will also strengthen us. God, who knew their doubts and fears, will guide us through all dangers, as he did his faithful Servants of old. If we persevere to the end, our souls shall depart in peace, and shall go up to dwell in Heaven, where, with the choir of Angels and glorified Saints, we shall for ever sing the mercies of the LORD.

BLESSING,

BLESSING, honour, glory, and praise, be to Thee, O Father of mercies, for having raised up holy men of God, as instruments to convey the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ unto the world; and overcome the kingdom of darkness: more especially we praise thy name for those eminent graces and virtues which shone forth in the Saint [or, Saints] we this day commemorate, who departed this life with the seal of faith, and now reigns in bliss and glory. We likewise praise Thee for all other thy servants* who have departed this life in thy faith and fear. Behold with pity, LORD, the dangers to which the frailty of our nature is perpetually exposed: grant that the examples of thy Saints may quicken us to follow them, as they did Christ, that we may, with a glad and willing mind, imitate their humility, self-denial, and courage in owning the truth: that we may leave an example of duty and obedience to those that come after us; so that at the last, with the Saints that are gone before, we may sing eternal hallelujahs to the honour of thy mercy, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. AMEN.

* Here it may not be improper to think on our deceased friends and relations.

assistance of that Holy Spirit, so necessary to guide us into all truth, and to enable us stedfastly to persevere in our duty. What then saith the gracious Giver of this inestimable gift? *If ye, who are fathers, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall your Father which is in heaven give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?* Devout prayer then is made the condition of receiving this greatest of all blessings. And if men are destitute of that Spirit of grace, by which they would be enabled to avoid evil and to do good, it is because they neglect this great and indispensable duty of prayer. What wonder, if their life be comfortless and full of dissatisfaction, if they seek not comfort where alone it is to be found, in a devout and frequent communication with God? What wonder, if they feel themselves forsaken of God, who are contented to live without
I any

any sense of His presence in this life, or without any hopes of His favour in the world to come?

But, in His other character of *the Spirit of Truth*, He is attainable by an humble and frequent recourse to the word of GOD; given in mercy to His faithful servants, as a *lamp* unto their *feet*, and a *light* unto their *paths*.

The introduction of sin into the world brought darkness, and propensity to error together with it: and from that moment the complaint has been universal, that the knowlege of spiritual things surpasses our ability, unassisted from above. As a remedy for this misfortune, it has pleased GOD to become our instructor, by opening to us the treasures of wisdom and knowlege in His sacred word; and *blessed* are they, whose *delight is in the law of the LORD*, and who *exercise themselves therein day*

and

and night; who seek for divine wisdom in the oracles of truth; and *search* for her as for hidden treasures, in those writings which are given to us by inspiration of God; and which are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God, not only the ministers of religion, but every sincere professor of the gospel, may be rightly informed, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Another way in which the assistance of this Holy Spirit is to be sought, is in that most sacred ordinance of our religion, the Communion of the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour. To suppose it to be a merely commemorative service, designed only to put us in mind of what Christ hath done and suffered for us, is to think very unworthily of this divine institution; which was ordained by Christ as an instrument

of grace, for the purpose of strengthening and refreshing the soul. God, who is rich in mercy, acts not towards us by miraculous impulse, but by ordinary communications, through the means which Himself hath appointed: and if we reject or despise the means, we must be content to fail of the end for which they were ordained. Now the pardon of our sins, the purification of our corruptions, the strengthening of our infirmities, the reformation of our evil habits, and the confirmation of our good ones, we dare affirm to be the blessed effects of a devout observance of this holy ordinance of the LORD's Supper. By this the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are conveyed to every worthy receiver, to pardon and deliver him from all his sins; to confirm and strengthen him in all goodness, and to bring him to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ.

We cannot perhaps more properly conclude this discourse than with that pious hymn, addressed immediately to the Holy Spirit, which makes a part of one of the most solemn services of our Church, I mean that of Ordination. The congregation is therein directed to implore the blessing of the Holy Trinity, and especially of the Holy Ghost, on the persons consecrated to the service of the altar, and on the whole body of Christians at large. It is rather recommended to us by the piety of its sentiments, than by the harmony of its numbers, or the brilliancy of its expressions; yet in some particulars you will find it applicable not only to the spiritual necessities of us all, but to the situation in which we stand at present, respecting our national concerns and undertakings:

COME,

COME, HOLY GHOST, our souls inspire,

And lighten with celestial fire.

Thou the anointing SPIRIT art,

Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart:

Thy blessed unction from above,

Is comfort, life, and peace, and love.

O brighten with perpetual light

The dullness of our weaken'd sight:

Revive the heart, and cheer the face

With the abundance of thy grace:

Keep far our foes; give peace at home;

Where Thou art Guide, no ill can come.

Teach us to know the FATHER, SON,

And THREE of both, to be but One;

That, through the ages all along,

This still may be our endless song:

"PRAISE BE TO THINE ETERNAL MERIT,

"O FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT."

AMEN.



